NATION

SC defends Ashoka prof's right to free speech

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BAT sells 2.5% ITC stake for ₹12.9K cr

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Website: salarnews.in www.magzter.com 29 MAY 2025 | THURSDAY | BENGALURU | 1 DHU AL-HIJJAH, 1446 AH Vol 4 | Issue No 145 | Pages: 8

Kamal in trouble over 'Tamil gave birth to Kannada' remark

Pro-Kannada groups protest; FIR filed; film body mulls ban on actor

BENGALURU, 28 MAY

Pro-Kannada groups in Karnataka went up in arms against actor Kamal Haasan on Wednesday for his "Tamil gave birth to Kannada" remarks, with a police complaint filed against him.

The Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce (KFCC) is set to meet on Thursday to discuss possible ban on the star ahead of his upcoming release 'Thug Life', directed by Mani Ratnam.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said Kannada has a rich and ancient history, and Haasan is "unaware" of it. State BJP President BY Vijayendra accused Haasan of "disrespecting" Kannada.

Pro-Kannada outfits protested against him in Belagavi, Mysuru Hubballi and Bengaluru.

Activists argued that Kannada boasts a history spanning thousands of years and accused Haasan of fuelling linguistic tensions. The agitators demanded that he apologise to the people of the state. They have even threatened to obstruct screening of his film 'Thug Life' in the state, if he fails to issue an apology.

Karnataka Rakshana Vedike, a pro-Kannada organisation, lodged a complaint at RT Nagar police station. In the complaint, the outfit alleged that the "controversial statement" made by the actor has not only hurt the sentiments of Kannadigas, but it has also sown seeds of poison between Kannadigas and Tamils and has insulted the former. "Every time a new Tamil movie is released, they have been constantly hurting the self-respect of Kannadigas. Such statements have been made continuously and have further disrupted peace and order between Kannadigas and Tamils," the complaint further alleged. "We have received a complaint. But no FIR has been registered yet," a police officer said. —*PTI*

Love will never apologise. I think what I said was said with a lot of love. Historians have taught me the language history. I didn't mean anything. Politicians, including me are not qualified to talk about languages as they don't have the education enough to talk about it
—Kamal Haasan, actor-politician

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said Kannada has a rich and ancient history, and Haasan is unaware of it ***PHOTO: PTI***

Kamal Haasan nominated for Rajya Sabha seat

CHENNAI, 28 MAY

Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM), a political ally of Tamil Nadu's ruling DMK, on Wednesday announced its president, Kamal Haasan, as its nominee for the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections scheduled for 19 June. The 70-year-old actor-turned-politician is expected to enter the Upper House for the first time, as the DMK and its allies possess the numbers to ensure the election of four candidates, including Haasan.

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AMID PREZ'S RULE

44 MLAs ready to form new govt in Manipur: BJP

IMPHAL, 28 MAY

- The BJP-led coalition comprises 32 Meitei, 3 Muslim, and 9 Naga MLAs. The Congress has 5 Meitei MLAs.

BJP MLA Thokchom Radheshyam Singh on Wednesday claimed that 44 MLAs are ready to form a new government in Manipur, following a meeting with Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla at the Raj Bhavan.

Singh, accompanied by nine other legislators, said, "Forty-four MLAs are ready to form a government as per the wishes of the people. We have conveyed this to the governor."

While the central BJP leadership will take the final decision, Singh added, "Informing the governor is akin to staking a claim." He also said Speaker Th Satyabrata has met the MLAs individually and collectively, and "there is no opposition" to forming a new government.

Manipur has been under President's Rule since February, following the resignation of BJP Chief Minister N Biren Singh amid heavy criticism over his handling of ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zos that erupted in May 2023. The 60-member assembly currently has 59 MLAs.

The BJP-led coalition comprises 32 Meitei, 3 Muslim, and 9 Naga MLAs. The Congress has 5 Meitei MLAs. The 10 Kuki MLAs include 7 from BJP, 2 from the Kuki People's Alliance, and 1 Independent.

The development comes amid renewed tensions over the May 20 Gwaltabi incident, where the state's name was obscured on a government bus. Meitei groups have demanded apologies and resignations, while Kuki-Zo groups continue to push for a separate administration. —*PTI*

FIR AGAINST 15 IN BANTWAL MURDER CASE

MANGALURU, 28 MAY

Bantwal Rural Police have registered an FIR against 15 individuals in the murder of Abdul Raheem in Bantwal near Mangaluru on Tuesday. Sources said suspects Deepak and Sumith are among the three who have been detained. Raheem and his co-worker Kalandar Shafi were attacked with a sword by two motorcycle-borne assailants while unloading gravel. Rahiman succumbed to his injuries, while Shafi is undergoing treatment.

The incident has heightened tensions in Mangaluru, already on edge after the killing of a 32-year-old man. In response, prohibitory orders have been imposed across the district until the evening of 30 May, with increased police presence.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has directed police to conduct a thorough investigation and swiftly apprehend all those involved. —*PTI*

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Anna University sexual assault: Accused found guilty, verdict soon

CHENNAI, 28 MAY

A Mahila Court in Chennai on Wednesday found A Gnanasekaran, a biryani vendor, guilty in the high-profile sexual assault case involving an Anna University student. The verdict will be pronounced on 2 June.

The court held that the prosecution had proven its case beyond reasonable doubt, with 11 charges backed by documentary and forensic evidence. Gnanasekaran, who sought leniency citing he was the sole breadwinner, was met with strong objection from the prosecution, which demanded the maximum punishment.

The case, which sparked a political controversy over Gnanasekaran's alleged ties to the ruling DMK, came to light on 23 December, 2024, when the victim filed a complaint alleging she was sexually harassed and threatened. He was arrested shortly after.

Following a media furore over the leaked FIR from the Tamil Nadu Police's CCTNS portal, the Madras High Court handed the investigation to a Special Investigation Team, which also probed the leak and later filed a chargesheet in February. The case was transferred to the Mahila Court. Reacting to the court's ruling, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin said justice wasW delivered in just five months. He lauded the police, prosecutors and judiciary for acting swiftly, reiterating the state's commitment to women's safety. —*PTI*

BANU MUSHTAQ HONOURED

Booker Prize winning author Banu Mushtaq felicitated by the Karnataka Union of Working Journalists in Bengaluru on Wednesday ***PHOTO: MOHAMEED ASAD***

THAROOR HAILS MODI, DRAWS CONG LEADERS' IRE

NEW DELHI, 28 MAY

Congress leaders on Wednesday slammed party colleague Shashi Tharoor for his reported remarks that India breached the Line of Control (Loc) for the first time during the 2016 surgical strike on a terror base, saying he should be declared a "super spokesperson of the BJP". BJP on defended Tharoor, stating that he was being attacked by his own party for keeping national interest above the Gandhi family. Congress top brass is miffed with Tharoor as there is a sense within the party that he is giving coverfire to the Narendra Modi government post Operation Sindoor. —*PTI*

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SC orders probe in Assam encounters

NEW DELHI, 28 MAY

The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the Assam Human Rights Commission (AHRC) to independently investigate alleged police encounters in the state between May 2021 and August 2022. A bench comprising Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh disposed of a plea filed by petitioner Arif Md Yeasin Jwadder, who alleged over 171 encounters lacked adherence to the Court's 2014 procedural guidelines. The Court observed that while a few cases warranted further scrutiny, most appeared factually incorrect, and a blanket probe was unjustified. —*PTI*

3 Indian citizens 'kidnapped' in Iran

TEHRAN, 28 MAY

The Indian Embassy in Tehran has urged Iranian authorities to urgently trace three Indian nationals who went missing on 1 May after arriving in Tehran. Hushanpreet Singh, Jaspal Singh, and Amritpal Singh, all from Punjab, reportedly travelled via Dubai on the promise of passage to Australia by an agent who is now missing. Their families allege they were kidnapped, with abductors demanding a Rs 1 crore ransom. A video showed the men tied up and bleeding. Communication ceased on 11 May. An FIR has been filed against the agent. —*PTI*

Buch gets clean chit in mkt fraud

NEW DELHI, 28 MAY

- Lokpal stated that the report was authored by a Hindenburg against the Adani Group, and thus could not form the sole basis for investigation

India's anti-corruption ombudsman, the Lokpal, has dismissed complaints against former SEBI chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch, terming the allegations as speculative and lacking verifiable evidence. The complaints, including one by TMC MP Mahua Moitra, were based on a now-defunct Hindenburg Research report that accused Buch and her husband of holding stakes in offshore funds allegedly involved in a financial scandal linked to the Adani Group.

The Lokpal stated that the Hindenburg report, published on 10 August, 2024, was authored by a known short-seller with interests against the Adani Group, and thus could not form the sole basis for investigation. Despite attempts by complainants to present independent allegations, the Lokpal found them unsubstantiated and bordering on frivolous.

Buch, who served as SEBI chief from 2 March 2022 to 28 February 2025, denied the claims and submitted a detailed affidavit. Oral hearings were held in April 2025, following written submissions. A six-member bench led by Lokpal Chair Justice AM Khanwilkar concluded that the complaints did not meet the threshold for action under the Prevention of Corruption Act. As a result, the case has been closed with no further investigation warranted. —*PTI*

4 STATES NEAR PAK BORDER TO HOLD MOCK DRILLS

NEW DELHI, 28 MAY

Civil defence mock drills will be conducted on Thursday across four states bordering Pakistan – Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, and Jammu & Kashmir – as part of India's ongoing national emergency preparedness efforts.

The drills come weeks after India's military action under Operation Sindoor, which ended in a bilateral agreement with Pakistan to halt military operations and cease firing. The exercises follow the deadly Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 civilians, prompting the government to launch Operation Abhyaas – a countrywide mock drill initiative.

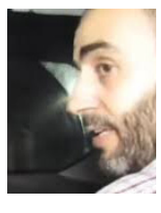
Directed by the Ministry of Home Affairs, the drills across 244 districts will include blackout exercises, air raid sirens, evacuation protocols, and public awareness drives, simulating wartime emergencies.

In Haryana, a state-wide civil defence exercise titled Operation Shield will be held on May 29 from 5 PM across all 22 districts. The exercise aims to test the state's emergency response systems and coordination between civil administration, defence forces, and local communities. Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Sumita Misra said the drill will involve civil defence wardens, registered volunteers, and youth organisations like NCC, NSS, NYKS, and Bharat Scouts and Guides. —*PTI*

Israel kills Hamas Gaza chief Mohammad Sinwar

CAIRO, 28 MAY

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday said that Mohammed Sinwar, believed to be the head of Hamas' armed wing and Gaza Chief, has been killed. There was no confirmation from Hamas.



Mohammed, the younger brother of October, 2023 attack's mastermind Yahya Sinwar, had the final word on any agreement to release the hostages. His death could further complicate US and Arab efforts to broker a ceasefire. He reportedly died in a strike on a Hamas command centre beneath the European Hospital in Gaza's Khan Younis on 13 May. Mohammed Sinwar was born in 1975 in the urban Khan Younis refugee camp. His family was among hundreds of thousands of Palestinians driven from what is now Israel during the 1948 war surrounding its creation. He became a member of Hamas' joint chiefs of staff, bringing him close to its longtime commander, Deif, who was killed in a strike in 2024. Mohammed was one of the planners of a 2006 cross-border attack on an Israeli army post. He is said to have been one of a handful of top commanders who knew about the 7 October attack in advance. In December 2023, the Israeli military released a video it said showed a bearded Mohammed Sinwar sitting next to a driver in a car as it moved inside a tunnel in the Gaza Strip. —*PTI*

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BETWEEN 2025 & 2029

Earth's avg temp to exceed 1.5°C limit

NEW DELHI, 28 MAY

There is a 70 per cent chance that the average global temperature between 2025 and 2029 will exceed pre-industrial levels by over 1.5°C, a report by World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) claims.

The report, released on Wednesday, warns of an 80 per cent likelihood that at least one of the next 5 years will surpass 2024 as the warmest on record. Notably, 2024 was the first year with a global mean temperature more than 1.5°C above the 1850–1900 baseline, the period before industrial emissions began altering the climate.

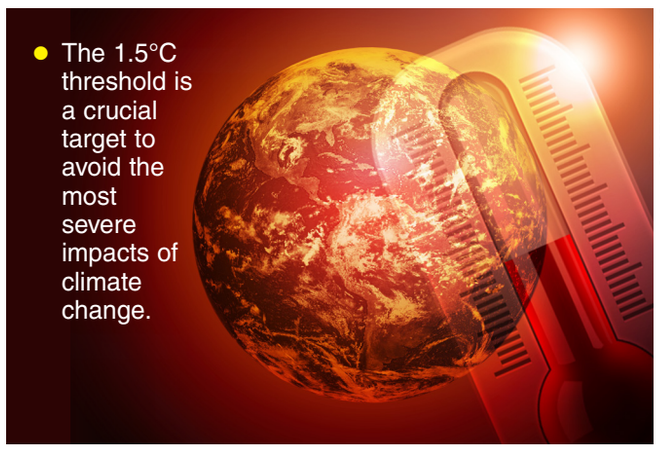

PHOTO: FREEPIK

The 1.5°C threshold, agreed under the 2015 Paris Climate Accord, is a crucial target to avoid the most severe impacts of climate change. However, the WMO stressed that a permanent breach refers to long-term warming over decades.

Nations are expected to submit updated climate plans for the 2031–2035 period this year, aiming collectively to limit global warming to 1.5°C.

WMO projects that global near-surface temperatures for 2025–2029 will be 1.2°C to 1.9°C. Arctic temperatures could rise by 2.4°C over the next five winters, leading to further sea ice loss in the Barents, Bering, and Okhotsk seas.

The WMO said that in South Asia including India, recent years have been wetter than usual (except 2023) and this trend is expected to continue between 2025 and 2029, although some seasons might still be dry. Regions such as the Sahel, northern Europe, Alaska, and northern Siberia may see increased rainfall, while the Amazon is expected to become drier. —*PTI*

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Dakshina Kannada tense after murder

Prohibitory orders in place; community leaders say the murder was driven by hate speech

MANGALURU, 28 MAY

The communally sensitive city of Mangaluru was gripped by tension following the murder of 32-year-old Abdul Raheem, prompting the imposition of prohibitory orders and a surge in security measures across Dakshina Kannada.

Raheem was attacked with a sword while unloading gravel in Bantwal taluk on Tuesday, succumbing to his injuries shortly after. The murder sparked outrage, particularly on social media, where many allege the act was a retaliatory killing in response to the death of Hindu activist Suhas Shetty on 1 May.

The incident comes close on the heels of the lynching of Mohammed Ashraf, a Kerala native, during a cricket match on 27 April—further intensifying communal strains in the region. Community leaders have claimed Raheem's murder was premeditated and driven by hate speech, though police investigations are still underway.

The aftermath saw sporadic violence, including stone-pelting on private buses in Surathkal, where at least two vehicles were damaged. A massive crowd accompanied Raheem's funeral procession from Kolathamajalu to the burial ground.

Security has been tightened in several sensitive areas, including Gurupura, Kaikamba, Bajpe, and surrounding localities, to prevent any escalation of violence.

Additional forces have been deployed and patrolling stepped up in sensitive pockets. Police forces from Udupi and Chikmagaluru have been summoned and deployed in Dakshina Kannada, district police officials said.

Authorities urged citizens to maintain peace while the investigation proceeds. *—PTI*

People gather during the funeral of Abdul Raheem, a 32 year-old who was killed when two motorcycle-borne youth attacked him and his co-worker with a sword, in Mangaluru, on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Discipline supreme for BJP: Agrawal on expulsions

BENGALURU, 28 MAY

BJP national General Secretary Radha Mohan Das Agrawal on Wednesday said the saffron party never wants to lose any of its members, but discipline is supreme for the party. The BJP in the State on Tuesday expelled two of its MLAs, ST Somashekar and A Shivaram Hebbar, for six years for alleged "anti-party activities." They represent Yashwanthpur and Yellapur Assembly constituencies, respectively. Agrawal, who is also in-charge of party affairs in Karnataka, said the BJP gave ample opportunities to Somashekar, Hebbar and Vijayapura MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal to mend their ways, but they did not change. Indiscipline will not be tolerated, irrespective of how influential that person is, Agrawal said. *—PTI*

Woman stabbed to death by husband in Chikkamagaluru

CHIKKAMAGALURU, 28 MAY

A 26-year-old woman was stabbed to death allegedly by her husband following a quarrel between them over some domestic issue on Wednesday, police said. The deceased was identified as Keerthi, a homemaker, they said. The incident occurred on Wednesday afternoon in Kaimara village in Chikkamagaluru after a quarrel broke out between Keerthi and her 32-year-old husband Abhinesh. In a fit of rage, he allegedly stabbed her at least 8-10 times with a kitchen knife. After the incident, her husband fled the spot. They have a two-year-old daughter, police said. *—PTI*

City student drowns at Bharachukki falls

MYSURU, 28 MAY

A medical student from City died at Bharachukki waterfalls in Chamarajanagar district. A group of seven medical students who were all studying at Dayanand Sagar Medical College came to Shivanasamudra for a picnic. Four students went for a swim on Tuesday evening in the Cauvery river near Dargah in Shivanasamudra. However, tragedy struck them and three students, Prafulla, 21, Tushara, 22, and Pramod, 23, had to be rescued by Kollegal fire station personnel when they struggled to swim. The deceased, Nandan Gowda, 21, washed away. He was found dead on Wednesday. *—Salar News*

RAIN WORRIES CONTINUE

CM asks ministers to visit flood-hit areas

BENGALURU, 28 MAY

State Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday directed district in-charge ministers and in-charge secretaries to personally visit areas affected by monsoon rains and floods.

He also convened a meeting of Deputy Commissioners (DCs), Zilla Panchayat CEOs and district in-charge secretaries on 30 and 31 May to review the situation and coordinate relief efforts.

"In the wake of heavy rains across the State, Siddaramaiah has instructed district ministers and district in-charge secretaries to immediately visit flood-affected areas and supervise the relief work," his office said in a statement.

Siddaramaiah gathered information from the officials about the rain-induced damage and directed them to take precautionary measures. He also instructed them to monitor the flood situation and expedite relief work.

According to officials, as of 26 May, a total of 45 houses were completely damaged and 1,385 homes partially damaged in the State due to rains. Out of them 99 per cent have been provided financial assistance.

As of 26 May, there was a grant of Rs 97,351.95 lakhs in the district and taluk level PD (Personal Deposit) accounts for disaster management, they said.

The Chief Secretary to the government has been asked to convene a meeting of DCs, CEOs and district in-charge secretaries on 30 and 31 May to conduct a comprehensive review in this regard, the release said.

According to officials, 170 taluks in the State were identified as flood/landslide prone, and 2,296 care or shelter centres were identified as a precautionary measure.

They said that 201 places under the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) limits were identified as flood-prone areas. *—PTI*

A low level bridge over the Krishna river in Chikkodi taluk submerged following rains in Maharashtra **PHOTO: SALAR**

Two children, bullock drown in Athani

Deepak, 9 and Ganesh, 7, the children of farmer Sanjay Kamble of Sambaragi village in Athani taluk drowned with their bullock in Krishna river bank stream on Tuesday evening.They were returning home from the field in their bullock cart. The two boys drowned in a ditch where sand mining took place *—Salar News*

Six bridges in State submerged by rains

BELAGAVI, 28 MAY

Seven bridges, including six on the banks of Krishna and its two sub rivers, were submerged owing to the incessant rains in the western forest zone in Maharashtra. Vehicular movement was blocked on the flooded bridges.

Bridges over the river Krishna connecting Yadur-Kallol, Manjari-Soudatti, Akkol-Sidnal and Malikwad-Dattawad Doodhaganga and a bridge being constructed in Khanapur taluk in Belagavi were submerged.

As rains continued in Maharashtra, a few more bridges are expected to go under water in Belagavi.

The Belagavi district administration appealed people on the banks of the river to move to safer places and not enter in the river, even for the livestock.

The traffic between State and Goa via Belagavi, which was stopped since Monday, resumed from Tuesday evening. Traffic was prevented as a temporarily constructed road along Malaprabha in Khanapur taluk mud road was washed away and a bridge downed *—Salar News*

Nagarahole shuts wildlife safari

The forest department has banned the wildlife safari from Nanachhi gate near Kutta in Kodagu district and Veeranahosahalli of Mysuru district following heavy rains in Nagarahole Tiger Reserve until further orders. An order was issued by Nagarahole Tiger Reserve project director and Deputy Conservator of Forest Seema B as rains continued without any relief. However, another wild safari it operates from Dammana Katte in HD Kote taluk continued as usual, the release said.

Inflow to Kabini, KRS increases

The water levels of Kabini and KRS dams increased rapidly. The water level in Kabini dam increased by four feet within a day, standing at 12.61 tmc ft against the total 19. 52tmc ft. The KRS dam recorded a water level of 95.35 feet. The maximum capacity of the dam is 124.8 feet. Officials report that if the current rainfall continues, the water level is expected to cross 100 feet within the next three to four days.

Covid under control, but stay cautious: Patil

BENGALURU, 28 MAY

Amid rising concerns over Covid cases, Karnataka Medical Education Minister Dr Sharan Prakash Patil instructed State run medical colleges and hospitals, as well as doctors and health workers to be prepared to handle a spike in Covid cases.

"There is no reason for the public to panic, as the government has taken all precautions," said Patil, who is also Raichur district in-charge.

As schools are set to reopen after summer vacation, he advised parents to not send to school students showing symptoms of fever, cold or cough. If children develop symptoms during school hours, parents should be contacted and the child sent home immediately, he said.

Even though no case was reported in the district so far, the RIMS hospital in Raichur said it is prepared to handle the situation in case there is a flare up. "Our hospital is ready to take care of Covid patients," said RIMS Superintendent Arvind Sagar. *—ANI/PTI*

ACTIVE CASES: 40
HOME ISOLATION: 38
POSITIVITY RATE: 10.12%

In the wake of the resurgence of Coronavirus, people began donning masks in Bengaluru, on Wednesday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Mysuru Maharaja helped establish HAL, says Yaduveer

MYSURU, 28 MAY

Mysuru MP Yaduveer Wadiyar on Wednesday said that it was not Jawarharlal Nehru, but then Mysore Maharaja, Jayachamaraja Wadiyar, who had helped establish the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) in City.

Wadiyar said that the Myrore Maharaja had granted 700 acres of land near Domlur in City for HAL, investing Rs 25 lakh during the 1940s.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar had earlier claimed that India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru gave HAL to Karnataka.

Shivakumar said that he would not allow shifting of HAL amid the tug of war with Andhra Pradesh.

"It is sad that HAL and the Karnataka government barely acknowledge the Maharaja's contribution to its establishment," Wadiyar said.

Meanwhile, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu claimed he never proposed shifting the site.

—Salar News with Agencies

SERVING THE SOLDIERS

Govt planning a separate corporation for veterans

BENGALURU, 28 MAY

State Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said that the government will make all efforts to set up the ex-servicemen welfare corporation in the State, aimed at the welfare of ex-soldiers.

He also announced that the government will not levy excise duty on military canteens.

Siddaramaiah was speaking at the Congress' 'Jai Hind Sabha' in the City , which was attended by Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, AICC General Secretaries KC Venugopal and Randeep Singh Surjewala, officials, ex-servicemen, families of martyrs, among others.

"There are media reports about levying excise duty on military canteens. It will not be levied. The second is that there is a demand for setting up an ex-servicemen welfare corporation, and the government will make all efforts in this regard," Siddaramaiah said.

"Not only this, we are with you. You are with the country and we are with you," he added

Deputy Chief Minister Shivakumar too said, "We will form a corporation which will help all ex-servicemen who are residing in Karnataka. I think this is the right time. Me and my cabinet colleague will discuss with the CM and we will honour our commitment for the strength you have given to the country."

Similarly, Shivakumar said "we are contemplating setting a separate corporation as per the advice of AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge. We are committed to protect our servicemen who protect our nation. I would like to thank all the servicemen for their contribution to the security of the nation."

Several ex-servicemen, families of martyrs were felicitated on the occasion including Ashok Chakra recipient Major Unnikrishnan, Ashok Chakra recipient Col Jojan Thomas, Shaurya Chakra recipient Major MC Muttanna, Shaurya Chakra recipient Major Ganesh Maddappa, Shaurya Chakra recipient Captain MV Panjal, Shaurya Chakra recipient Major Mohan Gangadharan, Major Shafiq Mohammed Khan, Sena medal winner Colnel Ramamurthy.

More than a thousand defence personnel including senior officials, ex-servicemen and families of martyrs attended the function. *—Salar News with Agencies*

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah with AICC Secretary KC Venugopal during Jai Hind Sabha to pay homage to the Armed Forces, in Bengaluru on Wednesday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Muslim quota Bill: Guv won't reconsider decision

BENGALURU, 28 MAY

State Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot on Wednesday declined to reconsider his decision of reserving the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurements (Amendment) Bill, 2025 for the consideration of the President of India.

The Bill has provision to give four per cent reservation to Muslims in government contracts.

The governor on 16 April reserved the Bill for presidential assent.

The State government made a fresh attempt recently to get Gehlot's nod to the Bill, which was turned down.

"The State Government has re-submitted the KTPP (Amendment) Bill, 2025 making reference to the Hon'ble Supreme Court in State of Tamilnadu Vs Governor of Tamilnadu in 1239 of 2023 seeking my assent," the order said.

Gehlot said the State government has referred to the observations of the Supreme Court in respect to the reservation of Bills by the Governor.

Referring to a recent judgement, Gehlot said the Supreme Court has emphasised that Articles 15 and 16 prohibit reservations on the basis of religion and that any affirmative action must be based on the socio-economic factors. *—PTI*

Darshan's foreign travel plea: Court reserves order

BENGALURU, 28 MAY

A Bengaluru trial court reserved its order on Kannada actor Darshan's plea seeking permission to travel abroad, amid the ongoing Renukaswamy murder trial.

The order was reserved on 30 May by the City Civil and Sessions Court. Darshan, out on conditional bail, had approached the court seeking permission to travel to Dubai and Europe from 1 to 25 June.

He is the second accused in the murder of Renukaswamy, allegedly involving his partner Pavithra and 15 others.

Special Public Prosecutor strongly opposed the petition, arguing that if Darshan is allowed to leave the country, there is a serious risk he may not return. Following his release on bail, Darshan resumed filming for his movie 'Devil'. *—PTI*

Govt approves 4 new investment proposals

BENGALURU, 28 MAY

State Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday announced that the Karnataka government approved four new investment proposals, two additional investment/amendment proposals with a total investment of Rs 15,441.17 crore, expected to generate employment to over 5,000.

These proposals were approved at the 65th meeting of State High Level Clearance Committee meeting led by the CM.

The approved new investment proposals are- Shree Cement Limited, Dalmia Cement (Bharat) Limited, Dalmia Cement (Bharat) Limited and Emmvee Energy Private Limited with a total investment of Rs 13921 Crore. The two approved additional investment proposals are -- Colortone Textiles Private Limited and Bosch Automotive Electronics India Pvt. Ltd with a total investment of Rs 1520.17 Crore, it added.

Meanwhile, the State government approved 63 projects with a total investment of 1,741.60 crore, expected to generate employment for about 7,219 people.

The projects were approved during the 153rd State-Level Single Window Clearance Committee meeting led by Minister for Large, Medium Industries and Infrastructure Development MB Patil. "63 projects have been approved in Dakshina Kannada, Tumakuru, Kolar, Vijaypura, Chitradurga, Chikkamagaluru, Belagavi, Raichur, Yadagiri, Kalaburagi and Bengaluru Rural." *—PTI*

BJP wants 'user fee' for residents to go

BENGALURU, 28 MAY

Opposition Leader R Ashoka came down heavily on the Congress government for burdening Bengaluru residents with excessive taxes.

Speaking to reporters at BBMP headquarters, he demanded that the State government withdraw the user fee for solid waste management imposed on City residents in addition to the garbage cess and revert to charging based on square footage.

He accused them of devising a scheme to extract revenue from garbage. He claimed that Congress imposes the highest garbage tax in the country.

He argued that this will increase house rents, as well as rates for commercial buildings, marriage halls, hospitals, schools, and hotels, he said. *—Salar News*

PM to visit 4 states to launch key projects

NEW DELHI, 28 MAY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will undertake a two-day tour across four states—Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh—on 29 and 30 May. The visit marks the run-up to the first anniversary of his third term in office. In Sikkim, Modi will attend the "Sikkim@50" event and launch key projects, including a new 500-bed hospital in Namchi, a passenger ropeway, and a statue of Atal Bihari Vajpayee. In West Bengal, he will lay the foundation for the City Gas Distribution project in Alipurduar and Cooch Behar. In Bihar, Modi will inaugurate Patna Airport's new terminal and launch development projects worth. In Uttar Pradesh, he will open the Chunniganj to Kanpur Central metro section and inaugurate projects. *—PTI*

Interpol issues first Silver notice on India's request

NEW DELHI, 28 MAY

Interpol has issued its first-ever Silver notice at India's request to track global assets of Shubham Shokeen, a former French Embassy officer wanted for visa fraud. Silver notice, introduced in January 2025 as part of a pilot project involving 51 countries, helps trace assets linked to serious crimes such as fraud and corruption. Between September 2019 and May 2022, Shokeen allegedly accepted bribes of Rs 15-45 lakh to facilitate Schengen visas and used proceeds to buy six properties in Dubai worth approximately Rs 15.7 crore. CBI had earlier issued Blue notice to locate him. A second Silver notice was issued against Amit Madanlal Lakhanpal, wanted by ED for defrauding investors of Rs 113 crore through unauthorised cryptocurrency.*—PTI*

Lalu Prasad names grandson 'Iraj Lalu Yadav'

PATNA, 28 MAY

A day after Tejashwi Yadav became a parent for the second time, RJD supremo Lalu Prasad and his wife Rabri Devi named their grandson Iraj Lalu Yadav. Tejashwi Yadav, the Leader of Opposition in Bihar assembly, and his wife were on Tuesday blessed with a baby boy at a private hospital in Kolkata. Announcing the name on X, Prasad said, "So our grand daughter Katyayani's little brother is named 'Iraj' by me and Rabri Devi. Tejashwi and Rajshree have given him full name as 'Iraj Lalu Yadav'." According to a family member, the baby was born at a private hospital in Kolkata where Rajshree was admitted for the last few days. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had also visited the hospital.*—PTI*

PHOTO: xxx

NTR returns via AI, moves TDP supporters

VIJAYAWADA, 28 MAY

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) paid heartfelt tribute to its founder, Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao (NTR), on his birth anniversary by unveiling an AI-generated video at Mahanadu 2025. The video, featuring a recreated voice of NTR, moved thousands of party workers with a stirring speech reflecting on TDP's 43-year journey. NTR hailed TDP not merely as a party but as a people's movement. He praised Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's transformative leadership, citing achievements like Cyberabad and the Pattiseema project. NTR also expressed pride in his grandson Nara Lokesh for carrying forward his vision. The speech concluded with blessings for the prosperity and unity of Telugu people, drawing emotional applause and a standing ovation from the audience. *—Agencies*

Cong miffed as Tharoor says India crossed LoC under Modi

Tharoor stated India breached the LoC in 2016 for the first time

NEW DELHI, 28 MAY

Congress leader Udit Raj on Wednesday slammed party colleague Shashi Tharoor for his reported remarks that India breached the Line of Control (Loc) for the first time during the 2016 surgical strike on a terror base.

Raj added that Tharoor should be declared a "super spokesperson of the BJP".

Congress MP Tharoor, who is leading a multi-party delegation to five countries, while speaking in Panama reportedly said that when "for the first time" India breached the LoC to conduct a surgical strike on a terror base in Pakistan that was something we had not done before.

Raj replied to this, "My dear Shashi Tharoor, Alas! I could prevail upon PM Modi to declare you as super spokesperson of BJP , even declaring (you) as Foreign Minister before landing in India. How could you denigrate the golden history of Congress by saying that before PM Modi, India never crossed LoC and International border."

How could you be so dishonest to the party which gave you so much, asked Raj, who is the chairman of the Unorganised Workers and Employees Congress Other Than Professionals.

Shortly after Tharoor's remarks went viral, his colleague Pawan Khera tagged him in a video where former prime minister Manmohan Singh said that many surgical strikes were conducted during the UPA era. With just a "CC @ShashiTharoor", the message was clear for all.

Tharoor's comments in Panama praising the Modi government's response to the terror attack since its take over are set to increase the tension between the grand old party and the MP.

The Congress, which had earlier supported the Centre's action against those responsible for the Pahalgam attack, now changed it's decision.

Questioning the government to explain why the ceasefire happened and what role US played in it.

Meanwhile, Tharoor, on the other hand, has praised the government's handling of the situation. *– PTI*

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, who is leading an all-party parliamentary delegation, meets the President of the National Assembly of Panama, Dana Casta eda and senior members Edwin Vergara and Julio de la Guardia, in Panama **PHOTO: PTI**

- Congress MP Tharoor, who is leading a multi-party delegation to five countries, while speaking in Panama reportedly said that when "for the first time" India breached the LoC to conduct a surgical strike on a terror base in Pakistan that was something we had not done before.

REVIVING TOURISM

Pahalgam violence won't stall J&K statehood talks: Omar

GULMARG, 28 MAY

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday asserted that the 22 April Pahalgam terror attack has not stalled discussions on restoring statehood to Jammu and Kashmir. Speaking from a tourist resort in north Kashmir, 52km from Srinagar, he said the issue was clearly raised during the recent NITI Aayog governing council meeting.

"If you examine the formal speech circulated at the meeting, you'll find a categorical reference to the return of statehood, submitted to the Honourable Prime Minister and all council members," he told reporters.

Abdullah clarified that he simply refrained from discussing statehood in a special J&K assembly session, but talks are ongoing. On reviving tourism, he urged Kashmiris to visit local destinations first. He also directed the Education Minister to organise school and college picnics to restore normalcy.

Regarding the attack, he urged people not to blame Kashmiris, emphasising the violence was neither supported nor welcomed by locals. He said the cabinet has approved a memorial for the victims, and a proposal is underway. He also stressed the need for coordination between the Union government, elected officials, and the LG to ensure future safety. *– PTI*

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah poses for a selfie with tourists, after a meeting at Gulmarg, in Baramulla district **PHOTO: PTI**

Aadhaar verification optional under new bill

NEW DELHI, 28 MAY

A new draft bill seeking to enable online registration of land documents and other transactions provisions alternate verification mechanism for those who do not have or do not wish to use their Aadhaar, according to its content.

The bill replaces the 117-year-old Registration Act, 1908.

The draft bill prepared by the Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development, introduces provisions to support online registration, electronic presentation and admission of documents, issuance of electronic registration certificates and digital maintenance of records.It allows Aadhaar-based authentication with informed consent, but also alternative verification mechanisms for the people who do not possess Aadhaar or choose not to use it. The bill also enables electronic integration with other record-keeping systems.Documents related to immovable property are to be registered along with wills, powers of attorney and other court decrees and orders related to property rights.

It lays down the procedure for appointment of the inspectors general of registration, registrars, and sub-registrars.

It promotes plain language drafting, digital enablement, and transparent procedures to make the registration process more accessible.

An individual will have to affix in the document their signature, passport-size colour photograph or get photographed by a digital camera and thumb impression and submit the permanent account number (PAN). *– PTI*

Bihar court sentences BJP MLA to 2 yrs in jail

DARBHANGA, 28 MAY

A Bihar court has sentenced BJP MLA Mishri Lal Yadav and his aide to two years in prison in a 2019 case of criminal intimidation.

The order was passed on Tuesday by the MP/MLA court at Darbhanga. MLA, who represents the district's Alinagar constituency, and his associate Suresh Yadav, were in 2019 accused by a local resident of assault and snatching cash.The court held both accused guilty and sentenced them to two years in jail, besides slapping a fine of Rs one lakh each. Failure to pay fine will lead to an additional prison term of one month.

Sources said disqualification process may be initiated once a copy of the court order is received. *– PTI*

SC shuts HC probe into Shah's remarks

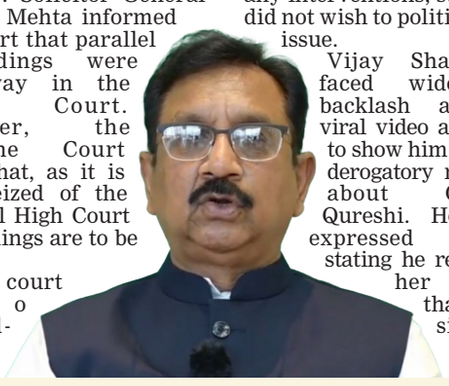
NEW DELHI, 28 MAY

The Supreme Court on Wednesday halted proceedings in the Madhya Pradesh High Court against state minister Vijay Shah over his alleged remarks targeting Indian Army officer Colonel Sofiya Qureshi. A bench comprising Justices Surya Kant and Dipankar Datta noted that the apex court is now handling the matter and called for a status report from the Special Investigation Team (SIT) set up by the state government following the court's earlier directive.

The SIT has reportedly seized several electronic devices and begun its inquiry. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta informed the court that parallel proceedings were underway in the High Court. However, the Supreme Court ruled that, as it is now seized of the case, all High Court proceedings are to be closed.

The court also extended its interim order from 19 May, including a stay on Shah's arrest. It declined to allow any interventions, stating it did not wish to politicise the issue.

Vijay Shah had faced widespread backlash after a viral video appeared to show him making derogatory remarks about Colonel Qureshi. He later expressed regret, stating he respected her more than his sister. *– PTI*



'France with India in fight against terror'

PARIS/RIYADH/PANAMA, 28 MAY

France has reiterated its solidarity with India in the fight against terrorism emanating from Pakistan and agreed that the democratic world needs to speak in one voice on the issue, BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad said at the conclusion of the Paris leg of his all-party delegation's visit to Europe.

The nine-member delegation was joined by representatives of the India-France Friendship Group in the French Senate led by its Vice-President, Jacqueline Eustache-Brinio and members of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee at the grand Luxembourg Palace for their final engagement here before departing for Rome, Italy.

Meanwhile, the all-party delegation visiting Saudi Arabia said India's stand on terrorism is resolute and uncompromising, lead member Baijayant Jay Panda has said.

Panama has assured India of its support for the "war against terror" as an all-party delegation led by Congress MP Shashi Tharoor met National Assembly President Dana Castaneda. Tharoor said India received strong assurances of understanding and support from Panama. *– PTI*

Vikram Misri meets US Under Secy in Washington

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON, 28 MAY

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri met US Under Secretary Jeffrey Kessler in Washington to advance bilateral cooperation in critical and emerging technologies, the Indian Embassy in Washington said.

Misri is visiting Washington DC from 27-29 May to meet with senior officials of the US administration, the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement on Monday. The visit is a follow up to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the US in February. *– PTI*

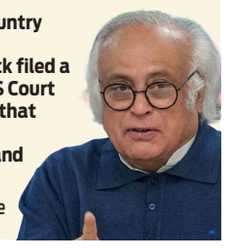
Student held for post on Indo-Pak conflict released from Pune jail

MUMBAI, 28 MAY

A 19-year-old engineering student from Jammu and Kashmir, studying in Pune, was released from Yerwada Central Jail after the Bombay High Court granted her bail. She was arrested for posting a critical message on Instagram during Indo-Pak hostilities amid Operation Sindoor, which she deleted within two hours. The High Court criticised the government's handling, calling it "absolutely shocking" and said it had "ruined her life" by turning her into a "hardcore criminal." The court suspended her rustication and ordered the college to allow her to sit exams with necessary security. *– PTI*

"The Prime Minister should let the country know whether it is true that the US Commerce Secretary Howard Luttnick filed a statement in the New York-based US Court of International Trade on 23 May, 2025 swearing that President Trump used his tariff power to broker a 'tenuous ceasefire' between India and Pakistan and bring about a 'fragile peace'?

-Jairam Ramesh, Congress General Secretary In-Charge



FOR 2025-26 SEASON

Govt hikes MSP for paddy by 3%; other kharif crops by 1-14%

NEW DELHI, 28 MAY

The government on Wednesday announced a 3 per cent increase in the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for paddy to Rs 2,369 per quintal and up to 9 per cent rise for pulses and oilseeds for the 2025-26 kharif marketing season.

The agriculture ministry's proposal on MSP for the new kharif season was approved in the meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by PM Narendra Modi.

The announcement comes amid southwest monsoon reaching earlier than usual, giving a boost to the sowing of kharif crops, which contribute over 50 per cent of India's total annual foodgrain production.

Briefing media after the cabinet meeting, Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said, "Two key decisions were taken for the welfare of farmers -- kharif crops MSP and interest subvention scheme." In the last 10-11 years, there has been a "massive" increase in the support price of 14 kharif crops in line with recommendation of Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices, he said.

In recent years, the government has been promoting the cultivation of crops other than cereals, such as pulses and oilseeds, and nutri-cereals/ Shree Anna, by offering a higher MSP for these crops.

The increase in 2025-26 kharif crops MSP is in line with the Union Budget 2018-19 announcement of fixing the MSP at a level of at least 1.5 times the average cost of production. *—PTI*

In recent years, government has been promoting the cultivation of crops other than cereals by offering a higher MSP for these crops **PHOTO: PTI**

Most Indians locked out of consumption economy: Congress

NEW DELHI, 28 MAY

Flagging reported, Congress on Wednesday claimed that a drop in the sale of passenger cars pointed to a state of the economy where most Indians are locked out of the consumption economy with growing inequality, stagnant incomes and weak investment.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications, Jairam Ramesh shared a media report claiming that while the middle class is increasingly unable to transition from two-wheelers to entry-level cars, the sport utility vehicle (SUV) segment is recording a rising share of first-time buyers.Ramesh said on X that passenger vehicles now amount to 31 per cent of total sale, while it was 65 per cent in 2018-19. SUVs now account for 65 per cent.

Ramesh said the last few years have seen a 'decoupling' of the two with medium GDP growth been accompanied by concerningly low growth in car sales. *– PTI*

Kamal Haasan nominated for Rajya Sabha seat

CHENNAI, 28 MAY

Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM), a political ally of Tamil Nadu's ruling DMK, on Wednesday announced its president, Kamal Haasan, as its nominee for the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections scheduled for 19 June.

The 70-year-old actor-turned-politician is expected to enter the Upper House for the first time, as the DMK and its allies possess the numbers to ensure the election of four candidates, including Haasan.

Following DMK's formal announcement of allocating one Rajya Sabha seat to MNM—honouring a pact made ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections—the MNM's governing council, led by General Secretary A Arunachalam, unanimously approved Haasan's nomination and sought support from alliance partners.

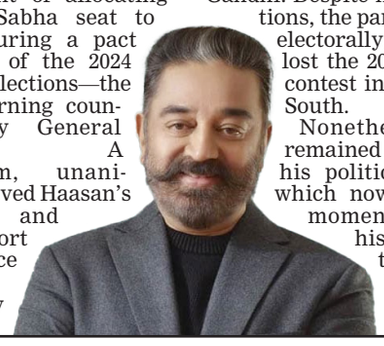
Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin congratulated Haasan, expressing confidence that his voice in the Upper House would uphold Tamil Nadu's rights, constitutional values, and national pluralism.

While the DMK has named three candidates, the opposition AIADMK is expected to nominate two, possibly in alliance with the BJP.

A contest is unlikely, with official candidates expected to be elected unopposed.

Haasan launched MNM in 2018 in Madurai, promoting centrism and drawing inspiration from Periyar and Gandhi. Despite high expectations, the party struggled electorally, and Haasan lost the 2021 assembly contest in Coimbatore South.

Nonetheless, he remained resolute in his political journey, which now finds new momentum with his likely elevation to the Rajya Sabha. *– PTI*



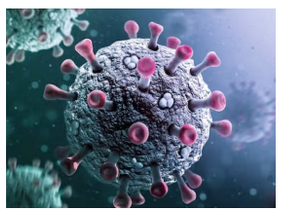


PHOTO: X

Arunachal Pradesh confirms its first Covid-19 case

ITANAGAR, 28 MAY

Arunachal Pradesh has reported its first Covid-19 case of the current wave, a senior health official confirmed. State surveillance officer Lobsang Jampa said a 34-year-old pregnant woman and her 53-year-old mother tested positive via RT-PCR on 27 May. The woman had arrived in Itanagar from Bengaluru on 13 May and initially tested positive through a rapid antigen test after showing mild symptoms. She is currently receiving treatment in hospital, while her mother, who remains asymptomatic, is in isolation. Health officials urged the public not to panic, noting that the current strain appears less severe than previous variants. The health department was monitoring the situation closely and a public health advisory will follow. *—PTI*

Odisha man gets life term for killing 2 people

BHUBANESWAR, 28 MAY

A court in Odisha's Bolangir district has sentenced a college lecturer to life imprisonment for murdering two people with a parcel bomb disguised as a wedding gift. Punjilal Meher, a college lecturer in Bhainsa, sent the explosive in 2018 to avenge a professional grudge against the groom's mother, Sanjukta Sahu, the college principal. The blast killed her son, Soumya Sekhar Sahu, and his grandmother and critically injured the bride, Seema Sahoo. The Patnagarh additional district judge convicted Meher under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, He received concurrent sentences of life imprisonment of 10 and and seven years under different charges, including a fine of Rs 1.7 lakh. *—PTI*

Tigress dead in MP's Kanha National Park

MANDLA, 28 MAY

A tigress, aged between 8 and 10 years, has died after becoming trapped between two large rocks on a hillock in Kanha National Park and Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh's Mandla and Balaghat districts. The carcass was discovered on Tuesday in the Mundi Dadar beat of the Kanha Forest range.During inspection, it was found the tigress was fatally wedged between the rocks. A dog squad assisted in securing and investigating the area. The carcass was retrieved with difficulty, and a post-mortem confirmed all body parts were intact. Samples were taken for forensic examination. Kanha is one of several prominent tiger reserves in the state, alongside Bandhavgarh, Pench, Satpura, and Panna.*—PTI*

Mumbai woman granted bail in road-rage case

MUMBAI, 28 MAY

The Bombay High Court has granted pre-arrest bail to Anam Ansari, who, along with her husband, allegedly fatally assaulted a biker in a road rage incident in Mumbai's Vakola area in March. At the time, Anam was 30 weeks pregnant and given birth to a baby. The court ruled that custodial interrogation was unnecessary, considering her recent motherhood and lack of prior criminal record. Her husband, Ahmed Ansari, remained in judicial custody. The prosecution opposed the bail, citing the severity of the offence and the missing slipper and helmet allegedly used by Anam in the attack. The court noted Anam had not absconded and that recovering the missing items did not require her arrest.*—PTI*

SC defends Ashoka prof's right to free speech

Says professor can post online, but not about FIRs in Operation Sindoor case

NEW DELHI, 28 MAY

The Supreme Court on Wednesday told Ashoka University professor Ali Khan Mahmudabad, accused of making contentious social media posts on Operation Sindoor, that there was no impediment on his right to speech and expression, but he can't post anything online.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Dipankar Datta refused to modify the interim bail condition imposed on him that he will not write any online post, article or make any oral speech related to either of the two online posts, which are being investigated.

He was also restrain from expressing any opinion in relation to the terrorist attack on Indian soil or the Indian armed forces' counter-response.

The court extended the interim bail granted to the professor and directed the special investigation team to furnish the investigation report on the next date of hearing.

The Haryana police were asked not to go "left and right" in the investigation and seek the "devices", which they wanted to examine. They have to apprise the court about their response to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) notice on registration of FIR against the professor.

The NHRC took "suo motu cognisance" of a media report in connection with the arrest.

The NHRC noted that the report disclosed, prima facie, that the human rights and liberty of the professor have been violated.

Haryana Police arrested Mahmudabad after two FIRs were registered against him.

Though he was granted bail, SC refused to stay the investigation against him.

The two FIRs were filed based on complaints by the chairperson of Haryana State Commission for Women, Renu Bhatia and a village headman. *—PTI*

The SC has asked the Haryana police to apprise it of their response to the NHRC notice on registration of FIR against the professor **PHOTO: PTI**

SC GRANTS INTERIM BAIL TO RAPE-ACCUSED IN JAIL

NEW DELHI, 28 MAY

The Supreme Court on Wednesday gave interim bail to a 23-year-old accused of raping a 40-year-old, noting that charges had not been framed even though he has been in jail for nine months. It also said the woman was "not a baby" and "a single hand can't clap".

A bench asked how Delhi Police could file a rape case against the man, a social media influencer, when the woman had gone voluntarily with him.

The apex court directed that the accused be produced before trial court and granted interim bail subject to certain conditions.

The plea filed related to a Delhi High Court order declining him bail.

The woman claimed that the accused allegedly intoxicated her during a journey and sexually assaulted her, captured her nude photographs and subjected her to continued abuse, extortion and threats for over two years. *—PTI*

Court holds DDA officials in contempt, fines ₹25,000

NEW DELHI, 28 MAY

The Supreme Court on Wednesday found Delhi Development Authority (DDA) officials guilty of contempt for felling around 1,100 trees in the Ridge area to widen a road, violating a 1996 and March 2024 ban. The court called it "administrative misjudgement" and fined the officials Rs 25,000. *—PTI*

Senior lawyers urged to avoid summer recess cases

NEW DELHI, 28 MAY

The Supreme Court has advised senior advocates to refrain from arguing cases during the summer recess, now termed "partial court working days". Justices BV Nagarathna and Satish Chandra Sharma stressed the importance of giving junior lawyers more courtroom opportunities.

The observation came during a hearing involving senior counsels. *—PTI*

Fire and rescue personnel move people who got stuck in a fun-ride to a safe place on Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Tech glitch leaves 36 stranded on roller coaster at Chennai park

CHENNAI, 28 MAY

- The fire and rescue services department along with the local police were involved in bringing down the stranded people. All of them were safely rescued after a one-and-a-half-hour rescue operation

What began as a pleasant evening at an amusement park near here turned into a terrifying experience for 36 people, including children, when their roller coaster got stranded mid-air reportedly due to a technical glitch.

All of them were safely rescued after a one-and-a-half-hour rescue operation on 27 May.

The fire and rescue services department along with the local police were involved in bringing down the stranded people.

There was total chaos when the roller coaster that could revolve a full circle suddenly got stuck. Luckily it remained above the ground, sparing the riders the risk of falling down.

Nevertheless, they panicked as there was no one to comfort or rescue them for nearly two hours.

A visibly shaken man said he used his mobile phone and Instagram account to seek police help.

None among those rescued were injured and an ambulance was brought to the theme park to check their health status.

"It is suspected that a mechanical fault left the giant ride stuck in mid-air," district fire officer Loganathan said. *—PTI*

HC drops plea for a Gujjar regiment

NEW DELHI, 28 MAY

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday refused to entertain a public interest litigation seeking direction to the Centre for the formation of a Gujjar regiment in the Indian Army.

A bench of Chief Justice DK Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela termed the PIL to be "absolutely divisive" and asked the counsel for the petitioner to do some research before taking up such pleas.

Fearing the court imposing costs on the litigant, the counsel withdrew the plea.

"The counsel for the petitioner states that she has instructions from the petitioner to withdraw the petition. The same is dismissed as withdrawn," the bench said.

The court was hearing a PIL by one Rohan Basoya, claiming that the Gujjar community has a well-documented history of bravery, having participated in various wars, including the 1857 revolt, Indo-Pak wars of 1947, 1965, 1971, Kargil war (1999) and counter insurgency operations in Jammu and Kashmir.

"Despite this rich martial legacy, they (Gujjars) have not been accorded a dedicated regiment, unlike other martial communities such as Sikhs, Jats, Rajputs, Gorkhas, and Dogras," the plea said. *—PTI*

INSPIRED BY 'DRISHYAM'

Guj woman kills man, sets body afire in her clothes to fake death

PATAN, 28 MAY

A married woman and her paramour in Gujarat's Patan district allegedly killed a middle-aged man, dressed the corpse with her clothes, and set it on fire to fake her own death, police said.

The half-burnt body of the man was found on 27 May near a pond at Jakhotra village in Santalpur taluka of Patan. The deceased was identified as Harjibhai Solanki, 56, a resident of Vauva village.

Police nabbed Geeta Ahir, 22 and her lover Bharat Ahir, 21, on Wednesday from Palanpur Railway Station while waiting for a train to Rajasthan.

Geeta, who lived with her husband at Jakhotra, reportedly convinced Bharat to arrange a dead body so that they can fake her death and live together after fleeing from Gujarat. She was reportedly inspired by the film 'Drishyam'.

Bharat waylaid Solanki at a secluded place the day before and killed him, before taking the body near to the pond, police said. Geeta fled her house in the night when everyone was asleep and reached the spot with a bottle of petrol.

Geeta's family members found Solanki's body while searching for her. *—PTI*

MUSHROOMING SETTLEMENTS

Illegal immigrants a threat to indigenous people: Biren

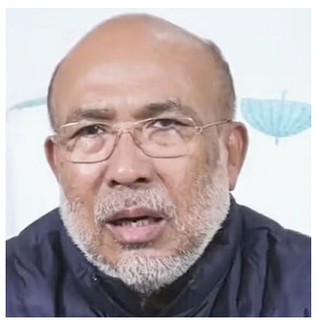
IMPHAL, 28 MAY

Former Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh has said the "unregulated influx of undocumented immigrants" led to rise of new settlements and villages in the state, threatening the identity and existence of indigenous people.

In a letter to Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla, Singh said the BJP-led government in Manipur had conducted verification drives, identified undocumented settlements and detained or deported hundreds of illegal immigrants since 2017.

5,457 illegal immigrants have been detected, mostly from Myanmar, after the formation of a three-member cabinet sub-committee in 2023. "Unregulated influx of undocumented immigrants have led to unprecedented rise of new settlements and villages, especially in tribal and forested areas and encroachment in reserved forests lands, and rise in identity-based tensions and unrests as these illegal immigrants are well armed and funded by poppy/drugs cartel," Singh said.

It put pressure on public services including education, housing and healthcare.



Biren Singh **PHOTO: PTI**

"Historically, military coups in Myanmar have triggered significant cross-border movement into Indian territory, especially in Manipur, due to the porous border of 398 km," he said.

Singh said the presence of illegal immigrants from Myanmar and Bangladesh has led to large-scale poppy cultivation in the hill areas of the state.

"Drug seizures and intensified crackdown on drug cartels disrupted the operations of armed groups based in Myanmar and operating in Manipur, leading to a surge in riots and unrest within Manipur, as they seek to resist the stringent measures of the government," he said. *—PTI*

Protesters lock offices, smear signs in Manipur

IMPHAL, 28 MAY

A tense atmosphere prevailed across Manipur on Wednesday as the student wing of the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) and several civil society organisations protested over the recent alleged removal of the state's name from a government bus by central security personnel.

The activists protesting against the move, on 27 May, locked several Central government offices in different district of Manipur and smeared sign boards bearing 'Government of India' in Imphal West district with mud.

The protests were witnessed in several districts, including Imphal East and West districts, with large groups of people demanding an official apology from Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla, the state's chief secretary and security advisor. *—PTI*

A commuter rides his scooter amid heavy rain in Mumbai on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Mumbai fines pump operators; more rains forecast for Odisha

MUMBAI, 28 MAY

- The BMC said the tender conditions required the operators to set up mini pumping stations at specified locations and make them operational before 25 May as part of the city's pre-monsoon preparedness plan

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has imposed a penalty of Rs 10 lakh each on four contractors for failing to install and operate mini pumping stations to clear the water accumulated at key junctions after heavy rains.

Mumbai witnessed heavy rains leading waterlogging in several low-lying areas and led to the suspension of suburban train services on some routes.

The BMC said the tender conditions required the operators to set up mini pumping stations at specified locations and make them operational before 25 May as part of the city's pre-monsoon preparedness plan.

Odisha: Heavy rain lashed several parts of Odisha under the influence of a "well marked" low-pressure area over the Bay of Bengal, even as more downpour is forecast in the state till 30 May, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Wednesday.

"It is likely to move slowly northwards and concentrate into a depression during the next 24 hours," the department said, while issuing 'Orange' alerts (be prepared to take action) in five districts – Jagatsinghpur, Puri, Cuttack, Koraput and Rayagada. *—PTI*

MAMA BEAR & BABY BEAR

An orphaned black bear cub about two months old, was found in Southern California's Los Padres National Forest -- weak, underweight and alone. Autumn Welch, a caregiver dons a fur coat, leather gloves and a bear mask for work these days, then enters an enclosure to feed the cub weighing over a 5.4 kg, who she hopes will consider her family. In hopes of the cub eventually returning to the wild, Welch wears the costume that is meant to stop the rescued cub from bonding with humans. The fur coats are stored in bins with hay scented by black bears

PHOTO: THE WASHINGTON POST

Record-breaking heat to push Earth into extremes

Get ready for several years of even more record-breaking heat that pushes Earth to more deadly, fiery and uncomfortable extremes, two of the world's top weather agencies forecast.

There's an 80 per cent chance the world will break another annual temperature record in the next five years, and it's even more probable that the world will again exceed the international temperature threshold set 10 years ago, according to a five-year forecast released on Wednesday by the World Meteorological Organisation and the UK Meteorological Office.

"Higher global mean temperatures may sound abstract, but it translates in real life to a higher chance of extreme weather: stronger hurricanes, stronger precipitation, droughts," said Cornell University climate scientist Natalie Mahowald, who wasn't part of the calculations but said they made sense. "So higher global mean temperatures translates to more lives lost."

With every tenth of a degree the world warms from human-caused climate change "we will experience higher frequency and more extreme events (particularly heat waves but also droughts, floods, fires and human-reinforced hurricanes/typhoons)", emailed Johan Rockstrom, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany. He was not part of the research.

And for the first time there's a chance -- albeit slight -- that before the end of the decade, the world's annual temperature will shoot past the Paris climate accord goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius and hit a more alarming 2 degrees Celsius of heating since the mid-1800s, the two agencies said.

There's an 86 per cent chance that one of the next five years will pass 1.5 degrees and a 70 per cent chance that the five years as a whole will average more than that global milestone, they figured.

There's an 86 per cent chance that one of the next five years will pass 1.5 degrees and a 70 per cent chance that the five years as a whole will average more than that global milestone ***PHOTO: PTI***

The projections come from more than 200 forecasts using computer simulations run by 10 global centres of scientists.

Ten years ago, the same teams figured there was a similar remote chance — about 1 per cent — that one of the upcoming years would exceed that critical 1.5 degree threshold and then it happened last year.

This year, a 2-degree Celsius above pre-industrial year enters the equation in a similar manner, something UK Met Office longer term predictions chief Adam Scaife and science scientist Leon Hermanson called "shocking".

"It's not something anyone wants to see, but that's what the science is telling us," Hermanson said. Two degrees of warming is the secondary threshold, the one considered less likely to break, set by the 2015 Paris agreement.

Technically, even though 2024 was 1.5 degrees Celsius warmer than pre-industrial times, the Paris climate agreement's threshold is for a 20-year time period, so it has not been exceeded. Factoring in the past 10 years and forecasting the next 10 years, the world is now probably about 1.4 degrees Celsius hotter since the mid 1800s, World Meteorological Organisation climate services director Chris Hewitt estimated.

"With the next five years forecast to be more than 1.5C warmer than preindustrial levels on average, this will put more people than ever at risk of severe heat waves, bringing more deaths and severe health impacts unless people can be better protected from the effects of heat. Also we can expect more severe wildfires as the hotter atmosphere dries out the landscape," said Richard Betts, head of climate impacts research at the UK Met Office and a professor at the University of Exeter.

Ice in the Arctic — which will continue to warm 3.5 times faster than the rest of the world — will melt and seas will rise faster, Hewitt said.

What tends to happen is that global temperatures rise like riding on an escalator, with temporary and natural El Nino weather cycles acting like jumps up or down on that escalator, scientists said. But lately, after each jump from an El Nino, which adds warming to the globe, the planet doesn't go back down much, if at all.

"Record temperatures immediately become the new normal," said Stanford University climate scientist Rob Jackson. *—PTI*

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR سالار

Assad's fall sparks Turkey, Saudi Arabia partnership

Sunni regional powerhouses Turkey and Saudi Arabia have had a complicated and often contentious relationship over the years. But their ties warmed significantly after Bashar Assad was toppled in neighbouring Syria in a lightning rebel offensive in December.

Since then, Turkey and Saudi Arabia have worked to stabilise the new government in Damascus and usher Syria back into the international fold.

It was no surprise then that the first trips abroad that Syria's insurgent-leader-turned-President Ahmad al-Sharaa made were to the kingdom's capital of Riyadh and Ankara, Turkey's capital.

That new Turkey-Saudi amiability was on display during US President Donald Trump's visit to the Middle East earlier this month, when he held a surprise meeting with al-Sharaa in Riyadh. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was in the room, while Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan joined the meeting by phone.

When Trump announced he was lifting sanctions imposed on Syria, he credited both the crown prince and Erdogan with persuading him to make the move.

Both countries enjoy the status of so-called "middle powers" — states that are influential globally but lack the clout of great powers — which has "fueled competition for regional dominance," she said.

The two also have different approaches to political Islam. Turkey has backed the Muslim Brotherhood, a pan-Arab Islamist movement that Saudi Arabia considers a terror organisation, as do several other Middle East countries.

After the 2011 Arab Spring swept across the region, Turkey openly supported the popular uprisings while the kingdom remained circumspect. However, both Ankara and Riyadh backed anti-Assad factions in Syria's 13-year civil war.

When Saudi Arabia and Qatar, another wealthy Gulf Arab state, had a diplomatic blowup in 2017, Turkey sided with Qatar.

The lowest point in relations came in 2018 when a Saudi hit squad killed Jamal Khashoggi — a Saudi citizen and US resident who wrote critically about the Saudi government for The Washington Post — at the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul.

Turkish officials — who had access to audio recordings from inside the consulate — alleged that Khashoggi was killed in a premeditated operation by Saudi agents and dismembered with a bone saw. Prince Mohammed acknowledged the killing came under his watch but denied he ordered it, though US intelligence agencies believe that he did.

Analysts say Assad's fall and the new reality in Syria intensified a thaw that was already underway between the two major US allies.

Hesham Alghannam, a Saudi political scientist and nonresident scholar at the Carnegie Middle East Center think tank, says it was an impetus that "significantly transformed Turkey-Saudi relations."

Their interests aligned in a post-Assad Syria, so the two shifted "from rivalry to pragmatic cooperation," Alghannam said.

Ankara and Riyadh shared concerns about Iran's outsized influence in Syria under Assad — which disappeared with Assad's ouster — and the two now want to ensure Tehran' doesn't stage a comeback, he added.

They also had their own security concerns in Syria — Turkey because of its long unstable border with Syria and Turkish insurgent Kurdish groups that have sought safe havens with Syrian Kurds.

For its part, the kingdom has worried about the smuggling of the highly addictive Captagon in the region, an amphetamine-like stimulant that had been a main source of revenue for Assad.

"Their mutual need to counter Iran, manage Syria's instability, and shape a Sunni-led government (post-Assad) has fostered a partnership," Alghannam said.

Riyadh and Ankara have also recently established a united front to counterbalance Israel, which has been suspicious of al-Sharaa, once a leader of a formerly al-Qaida-linked militant group.

Since Assad's fall, Israel has launched airstrikes, seized a UN-patrolled buffer zone inside Syria and threatened to invade to protect the Druze religious minority after Druze factions clashed with the new Syrian security forces under al-Sharaa.

Joint Saudi-Turkey lobbying helped persuade Trump despite opposition in Israel — Washington's strongest ally in the region — to lift the US sanctions on Syria, "in the interest of avoiding any new destabilisation," Cengiz said.

With the lifting of Western sanctions paving the way for lucrative reconstruction deals and other investments in the new Syria, analysts say the Riyadh-Ankara alignment is likely to continue.

Alghannam noted other signs of warming relations, including the revival earlier this month of the long-dormant Saudi-Turkish Coordination Council, a body charged with promoting cooperation across political, military, intelligence and economic sectors.

There will be arms sales, he said, pointing to Saudi interests in Turkish drones, as well as "joint reconstruction efforts in Syria."

While their rivalry could still resurface, "the trend toward Turkey-Saudi cooperation is likely to persist," he concluded. *—PTI*

After the 2011 Arab Spring swept across the region, Turkey openly supported the popular uprisings while the kingdom remained circumspect ***PHOTO: PTI***

Meet Neha Bhandari, lone BSF officer who commanded outposts along IB

Commanding a border outpost within eyeball-to-eyeball contact of a Pakistani post along the International Border, Assistant Commandant Neha Bhandari led her troops to silence three forward hostile posts across the zero line (area closest to enemy territory) by giving a befitting reply.

Apart from Neha, six women constables held a gun position on a forward border post, with their "josh" rising with every bullet they fired at enemy positions across the IB in Samba-R S Pura-Akhnoor sectors.

Neha, a third-generation officer from her family in Uttarakhand, takes pride in being part of the BSF and commanding a border outpost in the Pargwal forward area of the Akhnoor sector in the Jammu district during Operation Sindoor.

"I feel proud to be manning a post along the International Border with my troops. It is approximately 150 meters away from the Pakistani post in the Akhnoor-Pargwal area," Neha told PTI here.

Her feelings are vivid as she confidently says that commanding the post during Operation Sindoor was an honour for her. "It was an honour to serve at the forward post and give a befitting reply with all available weapons from my post to enemy posts," she added.

Giving details of how she silenced three hostile posts resorting to unprovoked firing on her position during Operation Sindoor, she said, "I had three posts falling in my area. I pinned down the people at all three hostile locations. We hit them with every weapon we had. They were forced to flee their posts."

The posts were decimated to ensure they were silenced, she said, adding that her troops performed their best during retaliation.

Expressing the high morale among the troops manning the post, she said, "The 'josh' was quite high. Everyone among us gave their best, because everything we did was for the country and its honour."

Neha's grandfather served in the Army, and her parents are from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), making her a third-generation officer in the family. "My grandfather served in the Army. My father was in the CRPF. My mother is in the CRPF. I am a third-generation officer in the force," she said.

She maintained that women did not lag behind, as they stood shoulder-to-shoulder with their male counterparts to give Pakistan a befitting reply during the three-day-long skirmishes.

"I had 18 to 19 women border guards with me. To be precise, six women were engaged in direct firing at observation post locations. We are proud of them," said Neha, who was the lone BSF woman officer to command a forward post along the IB in Jammu frontier during the operation.

Praising the role of women in combat at forward posts and their engagement in firing on Pakistani posts, Inspector General of BSF Shashank Anand said, "BSF women personnel played an outstanding role in this operation. Although they had the option to move to the battalion headquarters, they chose to stay at forward posts with their male counterparts and responded strongly to Pakistan." Anand said that BSF women personnel, including Assistant Commandant Neha Bhandari, had shown exemplary courage by manning forward posts and engaging enemy positions near IB.

Constables Shankari Das, Swapna Rath, Anita, Sumi, Milkeet Kour, and Manjeet Kour were manning gun positions at various posts, like their male counterparts, and giving a befitting reply to Pakistani troops.

They damaged 70 forward Pakistani posts.

The BSF action came after Pakistan launched heavy shelling on 60 Indian posts and 49 forward positions, providing cover for an attempted infiltration by 40–50 terrorists, officials said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

UK's biggest water firm fined £123M for polluting rivers

LONDON, 28 MAY

Britain's biggest water company was fined almost 123 million pounds on Wednesday for releasing sewage into rivers and streams while paying dividends to its shareholders. Industry regulator Ofwat said that Thames Water must pay 104.5 million pounds for failing to protect the environment, and 18.2 million pounds for breaking rules related to dividend payments. It's the biggest-ever penalty levied by the water watchdog. Ofwat said that the company, which provides water and sewage services to 16 million people in and around London, failed "to build, maintain and operate adequate infrastructure to meet its obligations" and also paid "undeserved dividends." *—PTI*

One killed as Thai, Cambodia clash at disputed border

BANGKOK, 28 MAY

A Cambodian soldier was killed when Thai and Cambodian troops briefly fired at each other in their disputed border area on Wednesday, officials said. Cambodian Army spokesperson Mao Phalla said the Cambodian troops were conducting a routine patrol along the border when the Thai side opened fire. On the other hand, the Thai Army's statement said the Cambodian soldiers entered a disputed area and Thai soldiers approached the area to negotiate but due to misunderstanding, the Cambodian side opened fire and the Thai soldiers then retaliated. The clash lasted about 10 minutes until local commanders spoke to each other and ordered a ceasefire. Cambodia said one of its soldiers was killed during the fight. Thai Defence Minister Phumtham Wechayachai said the situation has been resolved and both sides do not intend to open fire further. *—PTI*

Search on for six missing in blast at Chinese plant

BEIJING, 28 MAY

Six people remained missing and search and rescue efforts continued on Wednesday, a day after an explosion at a chemical plant in eastern China shook nearby buildings, killing at least five people and injuring 19. The plant is owned by Gaomi Youdao Chemical Co, a producer of pesticides as well as chemicals for medical use, with more than 500 employees. It is located in an industrial park in the city of Weifang in Shandong province The blast knocked out windows at nearby buildings and spewed a thick plume of white smoke, according to videos shared on social media. It was not immediately clear what caused the explosion. *—PTI*

European firms cut costs as China faces slowdown

BEIJING, 28 MAY

European companies are cutting costs and scaling back investment plans in China as its economy slows and fierce competition drives down prices, according to an annual survey released on Wednesday. Their challenges reflect broader ones faced by a Chinese economy hobbled by a prolonged real estate crisis that has hurt consumer spending. Similarly, on Tuesday, Taiwan president Lai Ching-te pledged to buy more American goods as the island seeks closer ties with the US despite facing a 32 per cent tariff. By purchasing more US products that also include weapons and agricultural goods, Taiwan would not only create "more balanced bilateral trade" with the US but also boost its energy autonomy and resilience, said Lai, while hosting a US congressional delegation. *—PTI*

US worried Israel may strike Iran's N-bases sans warning

Israel strikes Yemen's airport, Houthis suspected targets

DEIR AL-BALAH/ TEL AVIV, 28 MAY

As the Trump administration attempts to work towards a nuclear deal with Tehran, US officials are reportedly worried that Israel could carry out strikes on Iran's nuclear program without warning.

According to The New York Times on Wednesday, US intelligence believes Israel could carry out such a strike within seven hours of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu issuing such an order. This, the US worries, could leave them with little or no time to convince Netanyahu to change his mind.

Israel reportedly told Washington that they could strike Iran even if there was a nuclear agreement between US and Iran, yet US President Donald Trump remains undeterred in wanting to strike a deal.

The report said that the disagreement led to tense conversations between Trump and Netanyahu and a series of meetings between Israeli and US officials over the past few days.

This report comes shortly after Trump claimed that there would a breakthrough in the negotiations. "We've had some very, very good talks with Iran," Trump said on 26 May. "And I don't know if I'll be telling you anything good or bad over the next two days, but I have a feeling I might be telling you something good."

Israel had signaled it might strike Iran's nuclear sites just before Trump's Middle East trip, even if Washington reaches a deal *PHOTO: X@RT_COM*

In a separate development, Israel said it had carried out airstrikes on the international airport in Yemen's capital, Sanaa, after Iran-backed Houthi rebels fired several missiles at the country in recent days, without causing casualties. The Israeli military said it destroyed aircraft used by the rebels.

Meanwhile, at least one Palestinian was killed and 48 others wounded when forces opened fire on a crowd overrunning a new aid distribution site in the Gaza Strip set up by an Israeli and US-backed foundation, Gaza's Health Ministry said.

It was not clear whether the death and injuries were caused by Israeli forces, private contractors or others.

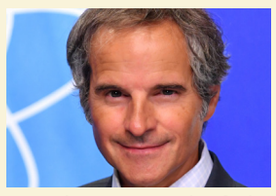
Crowds of Palestinians broke through the fences around the distribution site on Tuesday.

—Salar News with Agencies

UN nuclear watchdog calls Iran–US talks a good sign

Vienna, 28 May

The head of the United Nations' atomic watchdog said Wednesday that "the jury is still out" on negotiations between Iran and the US over Tehran's nuclear programme but said it is a good sign. International Atomic Energy Agency chief Rafael Mariano Grossi, made the comment to journalists attending a week-long seminar at the agency in Vienna. "For the moment, the jury is still out... The fact that they continue to meet ... that is an indication of a willingness to come to an agreement." *—PTI*



IAEA Director-General Rafael Grossi *PHOTO: IAEA.ORG*

German Chancellor Fridrich Merz welcomes Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at a meting in Berlin *PHOTO:PTI*

Zelenskyy visits Berlin, seeking further support

BERLIN, 28 MAY

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will meet with new German Chancellor Friedrich Merz in Berlin on Wednesday as Ukraine seeks further military support amid a recent escalation in Russia's campaign, despite US-led efforts to end the war.

Germany has been the second-biggest supplier of military aid to Ukraine after the United States. German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul also met in Washington with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Wednesday.

Zelenskyy said that he plans to discuss the supply and use of long-range weapons in his talks with Merz.

Merz said on Monday that Germany and other major allies are no longer imposing any range restrictions on weapons supplied to Ukraine. Germany hasn't said whether it will supply its Taurus long-range cruise missiles to Ukraine, something his predecessor, Olaf Scholz, refused to do and which Merz advocated for as an Opposition leader. The government has said it would no longer provide full details of the weapons it's supplying to Ukraine, unlike Scholz's administration, citing the need for "strategic ambiguity."

Meanwhile, Russia overnight launched an attack on Ukraine using five Iskander ballistic missiles, one guided air-launched missile, and 88 drones, Ukraine's Air Force said. Air defence units shot down 34 drones, and 37 drones were jammed.

Ukraine's railway infrastructure in the Kharkiv, Donetsk and Sumy regions were also struck overnight and Wednesday morning, Ukraine's railway company Ukrzaliznytsia said. No casualties were reported. *—PTI*

TRUMP'S 'PLAYING WITH FIRE' REMARK SPARKS WW-3 TALKS

MOSCOW, 28 MAY

A former Russian reacted strongly to US President Donald Trump saying his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin was "playing with fire", raising alarms over World War III. Dmitry Medvedev, who is also the Deputy Chairman of the Russian Security Council, said the only "really bad thing" that could happen was WWIII. "I hope Trump understands this," he wrote on X. In response, US envoy Keith Kellogg wrote on X, "stoking fears of WW III is an unfortunate, reckless comment… and unfitting of a world power." *—Agencies*

US using every tool in chest to vet people coming in: Bruce

NEW YORK, 28 MAY

State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce said that the US is using "every tool in our tool chest" to vet individuals entering the country. This was as the Trump administration directed US embassies and consular offices to halt scheduling new student and exchange visitor visa interviews, citing plans to expand social media vetting.

A leaked State Department cable dated 27 May, signed by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, instructed consular sections to pause adding visa appointments for F, M, and J categories until further guidance.

The move, reportedly linked to protest activity and campus unrest, follows intensified scrutiny of international students who participated in pro-Palestinian demonstrations. The administration has already revoked visas and initiated deportations in such cases.

The Department of Homeland Security recently revoked Harvard University's SEVP certification, barring it from enrolling foreign students, accusing it of fostering an "unsafe campus environment."

Ajay Bhutoria, former advisor on Asian American affairs, called the pause "alarming," particularly for Indian students. *—PTI*

Canada is facing challenges that, in our lifetimes, are unprecedented... I have always had the greatest admiration for Canada's unique identity... True North is indeed strong and free

—King Charles III

It will cost USD 61 billion if they (Canada) remain a separate, but unequal, nation, but will cost ZERO DOLLARS if they become our cherished 51st State. They are considering the offer

—Donald Trump, US President

US GOVT SUES N CAROLINA OVER VOTER REGISTRATION RECORDS

Releigh, 28 May

The Trump administration accused North Carolina's election board on Tuesday of violating federal law by failing to ensure voter registration records of some applicants contained identifying numbers. The Justice Department sued in federal court also asking a judge to force board officials to create a prompt method to obtain such numbers. *—PTI*

Aussie war crime whistleblower loses appeal against jail

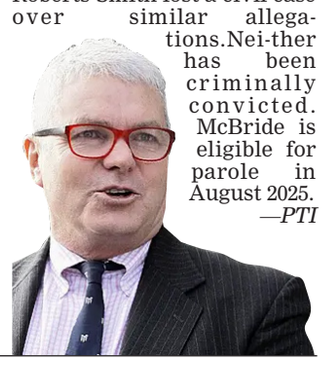
MELBOURNE, 28 MAY

Aussie Whistleblower David McBride Loses Appeal Against Jail Sentence

Australian Army whistleblower David McBride has lost his appeal to reduce a five-year, eight-month prison sentence for leaking classified documents alleging war crimes in Afghanistan. The ACT Court of Appeal rejected McBride's arguments, including his claim that his oath to Queen Elizabeth II obliged him to act in the public interest. Judges ruled that the oath required him to act in accordance with the law.

McBride, 61, a former army lawyer, pleaded guilty last year to three charges, including theft and disclosing secret documents to journalists. He remains the only individual jailed in relation to war crimes allegedly committed by Australian special forces between 2005 and 2016.

The documents formed the basis of the ABC's 2017 Afghan Files reports, which detailed alleged unlawful killings of civilians, including children. A 2020 military inquiry recommended criminal investigations into 19 soldiers over 39 unlawful killings. Former soldier Oliver Schulz was charged with a 2012 war crime, while decorated veteran Ben Roberts-Smith lost a civil case over similar allegations.Nei-ther has been criminally convicted. McBride is eligible for parole in August 2025. *—PTI*



SpaceX's mega rocket Starship makes a test flight from Starbase, Texas, Tuesday, May 27, 2025. *—PTI*

SPACEX'S THIRD STARSHIP ROCKET FAILS

TEXAS, 28 MAY

After back-to-back explosions, SpaceX launched its mega rocket Starship again on Tuesday evening, but fell short of the main objectives when the spacecraft tumbled out of control and broke apart.

The 123-metre rocket blasted off on its ninth demo from Starbase, SpaceX's launch site at the southern tip of Texas.

CEO Elon Musk's SpaceX hoped to release a series of mock satellites following lift-off, but that got nixed because the door failed to open all the way. Then the spacecraft began spinning as it skimmed space toward an uncontrolled landing in the Indian Ocean.

SpaceX later confirmed that the spacecraft experienced "a rapid unscheduled disassembly" or burst apart.

"Teams will continue to review data and work toward our next flight test," the company said in an online statement.

Musk noted in a post on X it was a "big improvement" from the two previous demos, which ended in flaming debris over the Atlantic.

Despite the latest setback, he promised a faster launch pace moving forward, with a Starship soaring every three to four weeks for the next three flights. It was the first time one of Musk's Starships – intended for moon and Mars travel – flew with a recycled booster. *—PTI*

2 face jail after Indian family froze to death

MINNEAPOLIS, 28 MAY

More than three years after a family of four from India froze to death while trying to cross into the US along a remote stretch of the Canadian border in a blizzard, two men face sentencing in Minnesota on Wednesday on human smuggling charges for their roles what prosecutors call an international conspiracy.

Federal prosecutors have recommended nearly 20 years in prison for alleged ringleader Harshkumar Ramanlal Patel and nearly 11 years for Steve Anthony Shand, the driver who was supposed to pick the family.

The prison terms are up to US District Judge John Tunheim, who declined last month to set aside the guilty verdicts, writing, "This was not a close case."

Tunheim will hand down the sentences at the federal courthouse in the northwestern Minnesota city of Fergus Falls, where the two men were tried and convicted on four counts apiece last November.

Prosecutors said during the trial that Patel and Shand were part of a gang that brought dozens of people from India to Canada on student visas and then smuggled them across the American border. *—PTI*

GRANDDAUGHTER AMONG VICTIMS

France jails doc who abused 299 children

PARIS, 28 MAY

A 74-year-old pedophile and former surgeon who raped hundreds of victims over a period spanning more than two decades was given a maximum 20-year prison sentence on Friday by a French court.

Joel Le Scouarnec was found guilty of raping and sexually assaulting 299 children.

Judges followed the public prosecutor's recommendations regarding the length of the sentence and the criminal court of Morbihan ordered that Le Scouarnec should serve at least two-thirds of the sentence before he can be eligible for release.

On Friday, prosecutors requested the maximum sentence of 20 years in prison, describing Le Scouarnec as "a devil in a white coat".

Former surgeon Joël Le Scouarnec (inset) was sentenced to 20 years in prison on last Friday *PHOTO: X@InfosFrancaises*

He's already serving a 15-year prison sentence, for a conviction in 2020 for the rape and sexual assault of four children, including two nieces.

The new trial in Brittany, France, began in February and has laid bare a pattern of abuse between 1989 and 2014. Most of the victims were unconscious or sedated hospital patients at the time of the assaults. The average age was 11; 158 were boys and 141 girls.

Using the cover of medical procedures, the former abdominal and digestive surgeon took advantage of moments when children were alone in their hospital rooms. His method was to disguise sexual abuse as clinical care.

His notebooks, which detail the abuse in graphic language, have become central to the prosecution's case.

Le Scouarnec confessed to all the sexual abuse alleged by the 299 civil parties, as well as to other assaults that are now beyond the statute of limitations. In a shocking admission during the trial, he also acknowledged sexually abusing his granddaughter – a statement made in front of her visibly distraught parents.

"I didn't see them as people," Le Scouarnec told the court. *—PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Gold climbs by ₹500 to ₹99,000/10g

NEW DELHI, 28 MAY

Gold prices climbed Rs 500 to Rs 99,000 per 10g in the national capital on Wednesday amid a firm trend in the overseas markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity rose Rs 500 to Rs 98,500 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes). Also, silver prices rallied Rs 1,000 to Rs 1,00,000 per kg (inclusive of all taxes) on Wednesday. Silver had declined Rs 1,370 to Rs 99,000 per kg in the previous market session. Globally, spot gold increased by USD 23.16 per ounce or 0.7 per cent to USD 3,323.87 per ounce. *—PTI*

Rupee settles flat; stays at 85.4 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 28 MAY

The rupee pared losses and settled on a flat note at 85.40 (provisional) against the US dollar in a volatile trade on Wednesday amid rising crude oil prices and a negative trend in domestic equities. Forex traders said increased month-end dollar demand added strength to the American currency, keeping the local unit under pressure, while investors also moved cautiously awaiting cues from domestic macroeconomic data. At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 85.59 and moved between an intraday high of 85.33 and a low of 85.72 against the greenback. The local unit ended the session at 85.40 (provisional) against the dollar, unchanged from its previous close. On Tuesday, the rupee closed 30 paise lower at 85.40 against the greenback. *—PTI*

No plans to exit Indian market: Nissan India MD

NEW DELHI, 28 MAY

Automaker Nissan has no plans to exit the Indian market, a top company official said on Wednesday, rejecting reports speculating on the company's future in the country. The company on the contrary plans to introduce three new products in the Indian market by early part of 2027 and also aims to add 20 more dealerships this year. In a virtual press conference, Nissan Motor India MD Saurabh Vatsa said the company aims to have a multi-product portfolio and aims to sell one lakh units each in the domestic and export markets this fiscal. "It is really important that I must put to rest any speculation that Nissan is planning to exit India and Renault Nissan Automotive India Pvt Ltd (RNAIPL) stake dilution is an indication of that," he stated. On 31 March, this year, Renault announced to acquire partner Nissan's 51 per cent stake in RNAIPL for an undisclosed amount. *—PTI*

China's BYD sued for 'slave-like' labour conditions

SAO PAULO, 28 MAY

Brazilian prosecutors said on Tuesday they are suing Chinese electric vehicle giant BYD and two of its contractors over allegations of using workers in slave-like labour conditions and engaging in international human trafficking. The labour prosecutors' office in Bahia said they are seeking 257 million Brazilian reais (USD 50 million) in damages from BYD, China JinJiang Construction Brazil and Tecmonta Equipamentos Inteligentes. The lawsuit stems from an investigation that led to the rescue last year of 220 Chinese workers from the construction site of BYD's new factory in the city of Camacari. Prosecutors said the workers were brought to Brazil under false pretenses and with visas that did not match their jobs. *—PTI*

BAT sells 2.5% ITC stake for ₹12.9K cr

Despite the dumping, the British multinational continues to be a key shareholder of ITC

NEW DELHI, 28 MAY

Multinational British American Tobacco (BAT), Plc on Wednesday trimmed its ownership in conglomerate ITC by divesting a 2.5 per cent stake for Rs 12,927 crore through a block deal, according to a revised term sheet accessed by PTI.

Following the stake sale, shares of ITC went lower by 1.15 per cent to trade at Rs 421.15 apiece on the NSE.

BAT, through its arm Tobacco Manufacturers (India) Ltd, sold the stake in Kolkata-based ITC.

Before the latest transaction, BAT through its affiliates -- Rothmans International Enterprises, Myddleton Investment Company and Tobacco Manufacturers (India) Ltd -- owned a combined 25.44 per cent stake in ITC Ltd.

Following the completion of the block trade, BAT will remain a significant shareholder of ITC, with less than 23 per cent stake in FMCG-to-hotel conglomerate ITC.

As per the latest block deal, up to 31.3 crore equity shares of ITC were sold at a final price of Rs 413 per share **PHOTO: X**

As per the latest block deal, up to 31.3 crore equity shares of ITC were sold at a final price of Rs 413 per share. This represents a discount of about 4.8 per cent to ITC's closing price of Rs 433.90 on the National Stock Exchange (NSE) on Tuesday, as per a revised term sheet seen by PTI.

Goldman Sachs (India) Securities Pvt Ltd and Citigroup Global Markets India are the placement agents for the transaction, sources said.

The total number of shares has been raised from the initial 29 crore shares as mentioned in the earlier term sheet.

The sources said 31.3 crore shares amount to around 2.5 per cent stake in ITC, and the offer size, based on the final price, is pegged about Rs 12,927 crore.

BAT is in the multi-category consumer goods business. Its strategic portfolio comprises global cigarette brands and a growing range of nicotine and smokeless tobacco products, including vapour brand Vuse; heated product brand 'glo' and Velo, a modern oral (nicotine pouch) brand. *—PTI*

ITC shares drop nearly 5% after stake sale

NEW DELHI, 28 MAY

Shares of conglomerate ITC fell nearly 5 per cent after British multinational British American Tobacco (BAT) reduced its stake in the company by 2.3 per cent through a block deal worth Rs 11,613 crore (USD 1.36 billion).

The stock dropped 4.33 per cent to Rs 415.10 on the BSE and tumbled 4.81 per cent to Rs 413 on the NSE, making it the biggest laggard among Sensex firms.

The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex declined by 122.44 points to 81,417.60, while the NSE Nifty slipped 40.70 points to 24,786.70 during the morning session.

BAT, via its arm Tobacco Manufacturers (India) Ltd, sold approximately 29 crore shares of ITC at a floor price of Rs 400 per share, representing a 7.8 per cent discount to ITC's closing price of Rs 433.90 on the NSE the previous day.

Before the transaction, BAT's combined stake in ITC, held through its affiliates Rothmans International Enterprises, Myddleton Investment Company, and Tobacco Manufacturers (India) Ltd, stood at 25.44 per cent. *—PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

India–US interim trade deal likely by 25 June: Sources

NEW DELHI, 28 MAY

With a team of US officials expecting to visit India next month for trade talks, there is a possibility that the two countries may agree on an interim bilateral trade agreement (BTA) by June 25. "Talks are moving. Things are on track," sources said.

India's chief negotiator, Department of Commerce Special Secretary Rajesh Agrawal, concluded his four-day visit to Washington last week. He held talks with his US counterpart on the proposed agreement.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal was also in Washington last week to give an impetus to trade talks. He met with US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick twice during his visit.

Both sides are looking at an interim trade deal before the first tranche of the proposed BTA as the US' 26 per cent reciprocal tariff on India, imposed on 2 April, is suspended till 9 July. However, Indian goods still attract the 10 per cent baseline tariff imposed by America.

In the interim trade deal, New Delhi is pushing for full exemption from the 26 per cent reciprocal tariff on domestic goods.

Both countries have fixed a deadline to conclude the first phase of the proposed BTA by the fall (September–October) of this year.

The US remained India's largest trading partner for the fourth consecutive year in 2024-25, with bilateral trade valued at USD 131.84 billion. The US accounts for about 18 per cent of India's total goods exports, 6.22 per cent in imports, and 10.73 per cent in the country's total merchandise trade. *— PTI*

Mkts decline as Sensex loses 239 pts

MUMBAI, 28 MAY

Stock markets declined for the second straight day on Wednesday with benchmark Sensex falling by 239 points dragged by losses in FMCG major ITC.

The 30-share BSE barometer declined 239.31 points or 0.29 per cent to settle at 81,312.32. During the day, it lost 307.61 points or 0.37 per cent to 81,244.02.

The 50-issue NSE Nifty dropped 73.75 points or 0.30 per cent to close at 24,752.45.

Analysts said the key indices remained largely rangebound ahead of the monthly expiry on Thursday and the release of GDP and industrial production data. FMCG, auto, and pharma shares declined while banking, mainly PSUs, media and energy shares advanced.

Among Sensex stocks, ITC fell over 3 per cent after British multinational BAT trimmed its ownership in the conglomerate by divesting a 2.5 per cent stake for Rs 12,927 crore (USD 1.51 billion) through a block deal.

IndusInd Bank, Nestle, UltraTech Cement, Mahindra & Mahindra, Power Grid, Asian Paints, Sun Pharma and Tech Mahindra were also among the laggards.

Bajaj Finance, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Adani Ports and HCL Tech were among the gainers.

"The domestic indices remained rangebound with a negative bias, primarily due to the lack of support from FIIs and prevailing premium valuations. A lingering concern over India-US trade relations following the end of the 90-day pause period continues to pose an external risk," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said. *— PTI*

LIC shares jump nearly 9% post Q4

NEW DELHI, 28 MAY

Shares of state-owned insurer Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) on Wednesday surged nearly 9 per cent after the firm posted a 38 per cent increase in net profit in the fourth quarter ended March 2025. The stock jumped 8.83 per cent to Rs 948 on the BSE. At the NSE, it surged 8.80 per cent to Rs 948 LIC on Tuesday posted a 38 per cent increase in net profit to Rs 19,013 crore in the fourth quarter ended March 2025 helped by lower expenses. *—PTI*

Stellantis names Antonio Filosa as its new CEO

MILAN, 28 MAY

Stellantis, the world's fourth-largest carmaker, named Italian auto executive Antonio Filosa as its new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Wednesday, replacing Carlos Tavares, who resigned under pressure last year.

Filosa, who is currently Stellantis' Chief Operating Officer for the Americas and chief quality officer, takes the post effective 23 June, when he is expected to announce his leadership team.

The move returns the running of Stellantis, created from the 2021 merger of France's PSA Peugeot with Italian-US carmaker Fiat Chrysler Automobiles, to Italian hands after three years under Tavares, who previously served as Peugeot's top executive.

John Elkann, heir to the Fiat-founding Agnelli family, remains chairman. *—PTI*

Gen AI a civilisational shift: TCS

MUMBAI, 28 MAY

India's largest IT services company TCS believes that generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI) is not just another tech cycle but a "civilisational shift" which will positively benefit every industry.

Tata Sons chairman N Chandrasekaran, who also chairs the TCS board, said the USD 30 billion IT services company will create a "large pool" of AI agents to work alongside humans and deliver solutions in a "human+AI" model in the future.

"Achieving near-human reasoning capabilities, GenAI is not just another tech cycle, it is a civilisational shift," Chandrasekaran wrote in the company's annual report published late on Tuesday. He said TCS has been proactive in using AI technologies and built intelligent agent solutions throughout the value chain.

The company, which is also the largest private sector employer with over 6.07 lakh people on its rolls as of March 2025, will have the largest AI-trained workforce in 2025 and has also launched an enterprise-grade Gen AI platform christened 'TCS Wisdomnext', he said.

"We plan four distinct progressions. First, we establish a large pool of AI agents working alongside our human workforce. Second, we deliver solutions through a human+AI model," he said. *—PTI*

TCS CEO's remuneration rises to ₹26.52 crore

MUMBAI, 28 MAY

K Krithivasan, the Chief Executive and Managing Director of India's largest IT services company TCS, took home a remuneration of Rs 26.52 crore in FY25. The package increased by 4.6 per cent in a fiscal year, said TCS annual report released on Tuesday. It is nearly 330 times the median salary paid to its 6.07 lakh employees. Krithivasan's compensation included a salary of Rs 1.39 crore, Rs 2.13 crore in perks and a commission of Rs 23 crore, it said. *— PTI*

ACROSS 7 MAJOR CITIES

Data sector may attract $25B in 6yrs: Colliers

NEW DELHI, 28 MAY

India's data centre industry has seen investments of nearly USD 15 billion since 2020 and is likely to attract USD 20-25 billion fund over the next six years, on rising demand, according to Colliers.

In its latest report, real estate consultant Colliers India mentioned that India's data centre capacity stands at 1,263 million watt (MW) as of April 2025 across seven major cities, and the capacity is likely to cross 4,500 MW by 2030.

The existing data centre real estate footprint stands at 15.9 million sq ft, and this is expected to rise significantly, reaching about 55 million sq ft by 2030.

Data pertains to co-location data centres in the top 7 cities - Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi NCR, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai and Pune. Data centre capacity represents total IT load capacity, including occupied as well as unoccupied space.

PHOTO: PIXABAY

"India is becoming a global DC hotspot, fuelled by rapid digitalisation, data localisation norms and strong government support. As this growth trajectory continues, India's DC capacity is likely to cross 4,500 MW in the next 5-6 years, translating into a real estate footprint of 55 million sq ft," said Jatin Shah, Chief Operating Officer, Colliers India.

"Interestingly, the market is expanding beyond large-scale colocation facilities and hyperscalers to edge data centres driven by increasing need for lower latency, real-time analysis, enhanced app performance, and business agility," Shah said. *— PTI*

- In its latest report, real estate consultant Colliers India mentioned that India's data centre capacity stands at 1,263 MW as of April 2025 and may cross 4,500 MW by 2030

The company's market valuation stood at Rs 8,262.53 crore. The Rs 2,150-crore initial share sale had a price band of Rs 85–90 per share **PHOTO: X**

Belrise shares jump over 11% in debut trade

NEW DELHI, 28 MAY

Shares of automotive components maker Belrise Industries Ltd listed with a premium of over 11 per cent against the issue price of Rs 90 on Wednesday.

The stock started the trade at Rs 98.50, rallying 9.44 per cent from the issue price on the BSE. It later jumped 14.66 per cent to Rs 103.20.

At the NSE, the stock listed at Rs 100, registering a premium of 11.11 per cent.

The company's market valuation stood at Rs 8,262.53 crore.

The initial public offer of Belrise Industries got subscribed 41.30 times on the closing day of bidding on Friday, helped by encouraging participation from institutional buyers.

The Rs 2,150-crore initial share sale had a price band of Rs 85-90 per share. *— PTI*

PHOTO: X

Serena Williams awarded Spain's Prize for Sports

MADRID, 28 MAY

Serena Williams has been awarded Spain's Princess of Asturias Prize for Sports for her stellar tennis career, organizers said Wednesday. The 43-year-old American won 73 career singles titles, including 23 Grand Slams. She said in 2022 that she was stepping away from tennis to focus on her family and business interests. The 50,000-euro ($57,000) Princess of Asturias Award is one of eight annual prizes covering different areas, including arts, literature and science among others. The awards ceremony, presided over by Spain's Princess Leonor, takes place each fall in the northern city of Oviedo.—*PTI*

Juan Ramon Veron, who scored at Old Trafford, dies at 81

BUENOS AIRES, 28 MAY

Juan Ramon Veron, who scored a goal against Manchester United at Old Trafford to help Argentina's Estudiantes de La Plata win the 1968 Intercontinental Cup, has died, his former team said. He was 81. Verón, nicknamed "the Witch," was the father of Juan Sebastián, the current president of Estudiantes and himself a former player. The team did not provide a cause of death, but Verón had been suffering from kidney failure for some time.—*PTI*

Judge steps down in Diego Maradona trial

BUENOS AIRES, 28 MAY

One of the three judges overseeing the trial of seven health professionals accused of negligence in the death of Diego Maradona stepped down from the proceedings amid controversy over her participation in the making of a documentary about the case. Julieta Makintach withdrew from the case after the prosecutor showed footage of the documentary that spans the first moments after the soccer star died in 2020 to the start of the trial more than two months ago, in which the judge appears as one of its lead characters. Following Makintach's resignation, the other two judges will have to decide how the case will proceed.—*PTI*

India series will be a real test for Crawley, Pope: Boycott

LONDON, 28 MAY

Legendary Geoffrey Boycott remains unconvinced that England's Zak Crawley and Ollie Pope have overcome their "technical and mental issues" despite scoring centuries against Zimbabwe, insisting that their real challenge will come in next month's five-Test series against India. Crawley has endured a tough few months, struggling in New Zealand where he averaged under nine and fell to Matt Henry in all six innings. Pope, too, had a rollercoaster 2024. Head coach **Gautam Gambhir** on Wednesday sidestepped queries on Shreyas Iyer's exclusion from the Indian squad for the England tour but lauded the BCCI for inviting the chiefs of the country's armed forces to attend the IPL final on 3 June in Ahmedabad.—*PTI*

IPL playoffs: Iyer's tact up against RCB's flair

Both teams will treat the game as a stepping stone to their ultimate goal

MULLANPUR, 28 MAY

Shreyas Iyer's inspiring leadership will face its toughest test yet when Punjab Kings host an equally upbeat Royal Challengers Bengaluru in Qualifier 1 of the Indian Premier League here on Thursday.

Having earned the cushion of a top-two finish, both teams can expect to take a no-holds-barred approach, knowing they will get another shot at reaching the final even if they come up short on the opening night of the playoffs.

Punjab Kings find themselves in unfamiliar territory having made the play-offs for the first time since 2014 but they are not carrying the baggage of the past in the Iyer-Ricky Ponting (head coach) era.

RCB, on the other hand, are way too familiar with the heartbreaks of the knock-out stages and, like every season, are hoping to end their title drought. In their own words, the job is only half done for both title contenders.

The Iyer-Ponting partnership has resulted in a stellar turnaround for Punjab Kings, who have finally cracked the consistency code after more than a decade of underperformance. The opening duo of Prabhsimran Singh and rookie Priyansh Arya has laid the platform for the likes of Iyer and Josh Inglis to build.

Finisher Shashank Singh continues to improve his game with each passing season, and more recently, Australian import Marcus Stoinis is finding his range with the bat, making the batting look more formidable.

The concerns lie in the bowling department, especially after the departure of South African Marco Jansen, who has returned home for national duty.

Jansen bowled the crucial overs both in the powerplay and death, and the team will certainly miss him on Thursday night.

The stakes will be high, but both teams will treat the game as a stepping stone to their ultimate goal. —*PTI*

Virat Kohli hugging Jitesh Sharma after the match **PHOTO: PTI**

PBKS VS RCB

HEAD TO HEAD	
PLAYED:	35
PBKS Won:	18
RCB Won:	17

PBKS vs RCB Match starts at **7.30 pm IST**

Moody lauds Jitesh's explosive knock

NEW DELHI, 28 MAY

Jitesh Sharma's extraordinary knock against Lucknow Super Giants on Tuesday was easily the innings of the season 2025 by a stretch, gushed former Australia all-rounder Tom Moody.

Stand-in skipper Jitesh pulled off a stunning 33-ball unbeaten 85 that carried his team, Royal Challengers Bengaluru, to the IPL Qualifier 1. When Jitesh arrived at the crease at the fall of Virat Kohli, RCB still needed 105 off 52 balls in a daunting chase of 228.

Before Tuesday, Jitesh had not hit a half-century in IPL, and when he did, he did it in style and produced a knock which will be talked about for time to come.

Swinging like a pro, he sent the ball soaring over the ropes six times, apart from hitting eight boundaries during his stay.

"The innings is, for me, the innings of the IPL this season by a stretch. We've seen some great knocks from young and old, but this one, wow, quite remarkable," Moody told Cricinfo. —*PTI*

FRENCH OPEN 2025

Alcaraz survives Marozsan scare to keep defence on track

ROME, 28 MAY

Defending champion Carlos Alcaraz deftly handled a dangerous opponent at the French Open when he defeated unseeded Hungarian Fabian Marozsan 6-1, 4-,6 6-1 6-2 to reach the third round on Wednesday.

Spaniard Alcaraz was toppled by Marozsan on the clay-courts of Rome two years ago and had moments of vulnerability on Court Philippe Chatrier but the 22-year-old top seed ensured there would be no unwanted encore ending his bid for a fifth Grand Slam title.

Iga Swiatek downs Emma Raducanu

Iga Swiatek has reached the third round of the 2025 French Open by beating Emma Raducanu in straight sets on Wednesday. Swiatek beat Raducanu 6-1, 6-2. The match at Phillipe-Chatrier saw defending champion Swiatek win her 23rd match in a row at Roland Garros. Swiatek won each of the last three women's singles titles here in Paris.

Bollipalli–Barrientos exit French Open

Rithvik Bollipalli's search for his maiden win in a Grand Slam main draw continued as the Indian and his Colombian partner Nicolas Barrientos suffered a tame straight set defeat in the French Open men's doubles opening round, here Wednesday.

Canada's Gabriel Diallo and Briton Jacob Fearnley, who knocked out Stanislas Wawrinka in the singles on Monday, dominated the contest, winning 6-0, 6-2 in just 56 minutes at Court 8. Bollipalli and Barrientos, who won the ATP 250 Chile Open in March, struggled to serve well and make returns. —*PTI*

Satwik-Chirag make winning return; Lakshya retires hurt

SINGAPORE, 28 MAY

India's top men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty made a winning return, while there was heartbreak for Lakshya Sen, who was forced to retire midway through his opening round clash at the Singapore Open Super 750 badminton tournament here on Wednesday.

Back on court for the first time since their withdrawal from the All England Open in March due to Chirag's back injury, the former world No.1 displayed no signs of rust as they beat Malaysia's Choong Hon Jian and Muhammad Haikal 21-16, 21-13 in just under 40 minutes in the round of 32. It was Satwik and Chirag's second win over the 41st-ranked Malaysian pair. The Indians are currently ranked 27th in the world.

The pair had also missed the Sudirman Cup earlier this month, with Satwik battling health concerns. Before that, they had made semifinal appearances at both the Malaysia Open and India Open this season.

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty **PHOTO: PTI**

India's no 1 singles player Sen was forced to retire hurt during his opening-round clash against Lin Chun-Yi of Chinese Taipei. Sen, currently ranked 17th in the world, started strong and took the first game 21-15. But his opponent, world No. 19 Lin, bounced back to claim the second 21-17. The match was evenly poised in the decider when Sen trailed 5-13 before he retired due to injury. The exact nature of Sen's injury is not known. —*PTI*

Tejaswin finds silver in South Korea

NEW DELHI, 28 MAY

Tejaswin Shankar endured a "rollercoaster of emotions" as he became the first Indian to win two decathlon medals at the Asian Athletics Championship and has no regrets at missing out a gold since he was able to deliver a podium finish for the country.

The national record holder in decathlon on Wednesday won a silver with a score of 7618 points in Gumi, South Korea. He had won a bronze in the 2023 edition.The difference between gold and silver is 16.3 seconds —*PTI*

AAC: India win gold in mixed relay

GUMI 28 MAY

India's 4x400m mixed relay team defended its gold with a domineering performance after four individual silvers and a bronze in varying events bolstered the country's overall tally to eight medals on a brilliant second day outing at the 26th Asian Athletics Championship here.

The Indian quartet of Rupal Chaudhary, Santhosh Kumar, Vishal TK, and Subha Venkatesan won the top honours with a timing of 3:18.12 sec. Of these, Rupal also claimed the individual women's 400m silver earlier in the day.

Subha, on the other hand, was a part of the mixed team that claimed gold in the 2023 edition.China, which finished a distant second with a time of 3:20.52s, and Sri Lanka, which clocked 3:21.95s to take third place, were both disqualified. The reasons for their disqualification have not been disclosed yet.

Due to the disqualifications, Kazakhstan (3:22.70s) and Korea (3:22.87s) clinched the silver and bronze medals, respectively.

The largely US-based Tejaswin Shankar was among the silver-winners for India, finishing second in decathlon after accumulating a score of 7618 following the regulation 10 events. He ended behind China's Fei Xiang (7634) and ahead of Japan's Keisuke Okuda (7602). —*PTI*

Injured Batra ruled out of UTT Season 6

NEW DELHI, 28 MAY

Indian paddler Manika Batra has withdrawn from the sixth edition of Ultimate Table Tennis (UTT) due to an injury. She will be replaced by Ayhika Mukherjee in the Ahmedabad SG Pipers squad. Manika is currently undergoing rehab for an injury she picked up during the recently concluded Table Tennis World Championships 2025.In the tournament, the 29-year-old, then ranked 46 in the world (now 47), lost to lower-ranked Park Gahyeon (64) in the round of 64. —*PTI*

Zidane 'can't wait' to take 'dream' France job

PARIS, 28 MAY

Zinedine Zidane, widely tipped in France to take over as national coach after the 2026 World Cup, said the job would be "a dream" and that he was "looking forward" to taking it. Zidane, who is 52, was speaking at an event on Monday organised by his long-time sponsors Adidas, French media reported. "I feel qualified for the French team, where I played and spent practically 12, 13, 14 years as a player. Of course, it's a dream. I can't wait," said Zidane, a former captain of Les Bleus and the scorer of two goals as they won the 1998 World Cup final.

Deschamps led Les Bleus to the World Cup in 2018 but has announced that he will end his reign after the 2026 World Cup in the USA, Canada, and Mexico. As a coach, Zidane took Real to three Champions League triumphs and two Liga titles but has not taken a coaching job since ending his second spell at Real in 2021.—*PTI*

RELIEF FOR DELHI FC

AIFF issues stay order on relegation in I-League

NEW DELHI, 28 MAY

In a major reprieve for Delhi FC and Sporting Club Bengaluru, the All India Football Federation's Appeal Committee has stayed their relegation from I-League until a final decision is reached on their submissions challenging the AIFF's disciplinary panel ruling.

The two interim orders, dated 24 May and currently in possession of PTI, revealed that both the clubs had appealed against the AIFF Disciplinary Committee's decisions that would have demoted them from the 2024–25 I-League season after they finished among the bottom two of the 12-team competition. Chaired by Justice (Retd.) Rajesh Tandon, with Ashok K Tripathi and Priyanka Mishra as members, the Appeal Committee noted that the circumstances warranted keeping any relegation-related action "in abeyance" until the final hearing.

PHOTO: PTI

"On behalf of AIFF, time has been sought for 2 days to file the objections; however, the circumstances of the case warrant that any order passed for relegation shall remain in abeyance and shall not be acted upon till the final hearing of the present appeal itself," both the orders stated.

In its appeal, Sporting Club Bengaluru argued that Namdhari FC had fielded an "ineligible player" during a match, a breach that they claim entitles them to three points.

Their advocate argued that the Disciplinary Committee overlooked crucial provisions (Article 57 of the AIFF Disciplinary Code), and that relegation has penal consequences, infringing Article 19 of the Indian Constitution (protection of rights). —*PTI*